

# **A Button Collector's Journal**

**LILLIAN ALBERT**



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Journal







A BUTTON COLLECTOR'S JOURNAL







# A Button Collector's Journal

LILLIAN ALBERT

HIGHTSTOWN, NEW JERSEY

*This book is affectionately dedicated to*

MY FAMILY

To DEWY—

*who set aside his many hobbies in  
order that he might help me with mine.*

To ALPHEUS, JR.—

*whose generous criticism stirred me to  
such a degree as to finish this Journal.*



## IN APPRECIATION

*I want to acknowledge here my appreciation to those older friends of mine:*

MRS. HARVEY G. RUE

MRS. HENRY D. MOUNT

MRS. GEORGE B. ELY

*who in the very beginning of my collecting career gave fully and freely of the contents of their old button boxes which go back several generations; and to*

MISS JANE B. DONNELL

OWNER OF THE PATCHWORK HOUSE, HIGHTSTOWN, NEW JERSEY  
(FORMERLY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS, HIGHTSTOWN)

*who has encouraged this hobby of mine by keeping for me all the unusual buttons that have come to her attention; also to two special friends, without whose help this Journal would not have been assembled,*

MR. JOHN P. DEAN

MEMBER OF THE HIGHTSTOWN HIGH SCHOOL FACULTY  
*who photographed all of the buttons for the illustrations; and*

MRS. GRACE H. WEST

*who spent days on end typing this manuscript; and finally to*

MR. O. C. LIGHTNER

EDITOR OF "HOBBIES"

*who has done splendid work in fostering and furthering this hobby of ours; and*

MY MANY FRIENDS

*who from time to time have added to my button collection.*

LILLIAN ALBERT

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by

LILLIAN SMITH ALBERT  
HIGHTSTOWN, NEW JERSEY

*Lillian Smith Albert*

*Printed in the U. S. A.*

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## PREFACE

IN LOOKING back over this manuscript—the information that I have been collecting over the past two years seems rather incomplete. At this point button information is still so meager that each month button history is being made by the contributions to the button column of the *Hobbies* magazine.

During the past few years of "mail trading," many have written me that they are keeping the notes I make when trading; others have asked me to assemble these notes; still others write and ask whether I have any costume information to go with buttons. After all, collectors, in displaying their buttons, like to tell who wore the button—and when, as well as to explain who made the button—and how. With these objectives in mind, I have assembled these notes.

I shall continue my search for information—for it is only by these additions that the hobby can grow—it may be a long time before the final word has been written on buttons.

LILLIAN SMITH ALBERT  
Hightstown, New Jersey

## BUTTON LORE

*Across the button Sea we'll sail  
In bustles or in hoops  
Where buttonholes of every size  
Hobnob with silken loops.  
For every loop and hole we'll find  
A button that will fit  
We'll filch a few from Grandma's string  
And Great Gran's button kit.  
A jet from Cynthia's lovely basque,  
Pressed gold from Grandpa's cape,  
These tinies from the guimpe that hid  
Dear Grandma's snowy nape.  
Oh, I can sit for hours and hours  
While button tales are told . . .  
Exciting tales, rare anecdotes,  
Clay, tin, pressed glass and gold!  
Now who designed the Picture ones  
With satyrs, scenes and fauns?  
And who thot up the fragile ones  
For point d'esprit and lawns?  
These sturdy horn and bone were used  
By hardy Pioneers,  
While costly crystal, silver, gold,  
Winked under chandeliers.  
I'll curl up in a comfy chair  
Their histories I'll learn  
Who made and wore them, when and where  
I'll read as pages turn.*



SUNDAY, August 11, 1940.—Some time ago we decided (my husband and I) to spend part of the summer in scouring the countryside in search of old buttons. During the school year we are both pretty well tied up in our own town, having an occasional Saturday or school holiday only to do scouting. Credit for our turning collectors several years ago goes to Mr. David Johnson. He has been a collector for many years and we respect his knowledge of buttons. He has studied them from the manufacturers' viewpoint as well as the collectors' and has originated a classification which has helped us greatly in our mounting.

While every type of button has interested me, some, more than others, are my favorites. I list them as they appeal most—glass of all types and colors, calicos, hand-painted china and pearl, gold, silver and iridescent surfaces on Jet (black glass), jewel waist-coat, glass center metal rims, inlays in horn and tortoise shell, heads, animals, scenes, picture buttons in all materials, enamel and cloisonné. Dewy (as I call my husband) goes in for one and two-piece metals and commemoratives. He has an analytical mind and has helped me very much in determining the materials many buttons are made of. Besides buttons he has fourteen other hobbies, so before I finish this journal I'm sure I will have mentioned them all. As I come across buttons on original cards I shall list the information regarding them, for I find this has helped me greatly in forming a more correct idea of prices for standardization today. The findings I set down for your inspection come from interviews I have had with older dressmakers, elderly ladies, women prominent in America today, country and city storekeepers, manufacturers and importers as well as from studying the various types of buttons found in museums, on portraits and costumes of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. I found by examining button boxes in



various localities that there is a marked difference. Along with the general type one finds there are "foreigners" due to several reasons—different button salesmen, locality, and a shifting of people from one part of the country to another.

I have found the country store to be the collectors' best chance of getting specimen or new buttons, as much of their button stock is still intact and they are willing to sell at a fair price.

I have tried to bring before you many types of buttons using actual names and places in my Journal, allowing further opportunity for research to anyone so inclined. If I have contributed toward a better understanding of this newest hobby and have created within you the desire to go and find "Bigger and Better Buttons," then it will have been worth the effort and I shall be satisfied.

MONDAY — After getting Patty (our Collie dog) fed, and the son off to college... friend husband and I decided to ride around the surrounding country villages, some of which celebrated their bi-centennial twenty years ago. In many cases the old stores are now in new hands—old stock having been cleared out several years ago. However, we did find quite a number where old buttons could still be found. At the first store I found both horn and vegetable ivory, inlaid and pierced in many patterns, still on the original French cards marked five cents a dozen. Most of them had twenty-four buttons to the card. There were also covered silk, either thirty-six or seventy-two buttons to a card, selling for sixteen cents a dozen. These were about the size of a dime and came in all colors. Others were covered buttons of "Rep," brocades, and tapestry materials on a mould of sheet tin pressed into various designs with a shank of canvas through which the needle would pass. These were marked originally at twelve to eighteen cents a dozen. The store keeper had pounds



of them in a large sectional wooden box. While ordinarily many collectors do not go in for this type button, still, one should collect them to have a truly representative collection (*see Plate 1. A-5*). Some of the natural colored vegetable ivory buttons were dated 1864 and with the passing of time have mellowed in color. These buttons have wonderful wearing qualities and the variety in color and shape is unlimited. Some of the buttons here in this store have intricate pierced detail and will make beautiful additions to my collection. I have hundreds of designs which on the whole are not spectacular, but there are some of these buttons that have unusual detail, and in that case I keep entire cards with two dozen buttons to a card. From *Art in Buttons*, Rochester, N. Y., I obtained a fine small exhibit showing the ivory nut in a number of steps in the process of manufacture. It is an educational feature for those of us giving talks on buttons.

During the past few years of collecting I have discovered that country stores carried a line of buttons, usually plain in design as well as material, since these best suited the needs of the country dressmaker. It was to the department or larger city stores that I turned for buttons of choicer detail, design and material, as the city dressmakers were nearer the models showing the prevailing styles. However, it wasn't long before I discovered that even department stores have ways of disposing of old buttons by marking them down until they are finally sold or sacrificing the lot to junk or rummage collectors. One of the largest button houses, B. Blumenthal & Company, told me they had cleared out all their old stock several years ago, selling it by the pound!

These old "Rep" buttons (*see Plate 1. A-5*) too, make an interesting collection, for the designs on the face are so varied. Surely one finds these among our older buttons, for in a number of museums I made special note that this kind were worn on costumes during the early part of the nineteenth century, and continued on through the generations as fashion decreed. There



were years when covered buttons were more popular, as in the seventeen hundreds, when no small amount of labor was used in embroidering silk, satin, or linen buttons with fine silky embroidery floss, or gold and silver thread. Lately, in museums, I have found a small rosebud design with green leaves framed in a tiny embroidered circle the most popular pattern. Of course, this type went with gowns of brocades and satins, as well as being used on gentlemen's waistcoats which were very elaborate during this period (*see Plate 1. B-1*).

While today's button trip brought me only original cards of silk and bone, and the loose "Rep" type, still I feel I'm getting the atmosphere I need in order to work up several talks to women's clubs in the late fall and winter.

# PLATE 1.

Row	No.	Classification	Description
A	1	Chalcedony	A translucent variety of quartz, gray in color; old.
	2	Calico cloth	Printed design; found by Dorothy Lloyd, Hamburg, Penna., and by Sarah Buchanan, in Maine; on original cards, 144 buttons to card, priced 10 cents a dozen. Card marked <i>Parisiens Sultanes, Depose, Hotel de Ville</i> , about 1850. Also won bronze medal in 1844; gold medal in 1849.
	3	Printed tin	String back, about 1850.
	4	Straw	Button trimming, probably about 1825.
	5	"Rep"	Anchor design, original price 20 cents a dozen, 72 to a card or sold uncarded; pressed design on top of covered tin mold, metal back canvas shank.
B	1	Needlework	Museum type, covered button mould, embroidered rose design.
	2	Needlework	Beaded covered button mould, string back.
	3	Glass insert	Covered button mould, canvas shank.
	4	Glass center	Metal collet, string back.



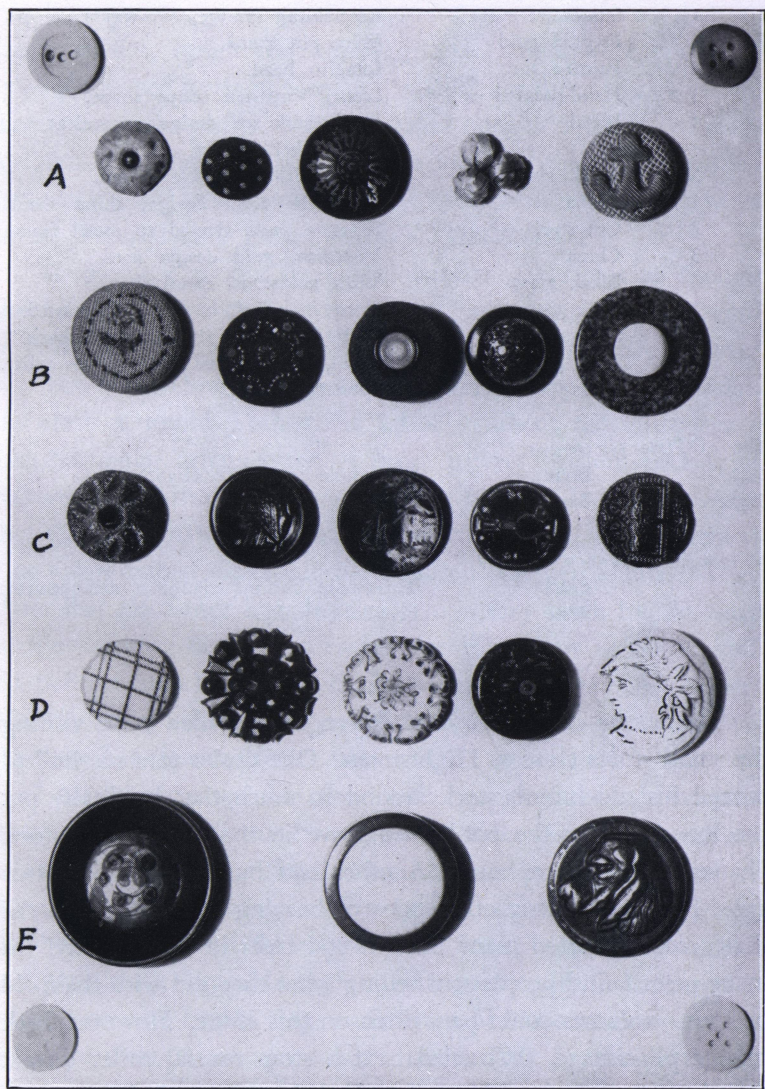


PLATE 1

Buttons illustrated are seven-eighths of actual size.



	5	Stoneware	Resembling granite, two-way type.
C	1	Frosted gold	Wire pin shank.
	2	Painted tin	Intaglio head.
	3	Hand-painted	Scene, Victorian coupe shape.
	4	Metal	Hook and eye design on velvet, cut steel embellishment.
	5	Black glass	Copper lustre, buckle design.
D	1	China	Fired for color design, china shank.
	2	Cut steel	Separate parts riveted to metal frame.
	3	China	Victorian, gold design fired.
	4	Black glass	With goldstone, metal shank.
	5	Milk glass	Head in relief, background painted.
E	1	Slipware center	Victorian coupe shape, canvas back.
	2	Milk glass	Insert, drum shaped button, brass collet.
	3	Brass	Sporting button.

*Top of Plate (in corners)*

Left	Bone	Three-hole button in alignment.
Right	Bone	Five-hole button, tan.

*Bottom of Plate (in corners)*

Left	Pearl	Three-hole button, triangular arrangement.
Right	Bone	Five-hole, white.

TUESDAY.—After the mail delivery we headed west, visiting the small stores close to Hightstown. One dealer told me he had moved his old button stock around so much that he finally put the lot of it into the pot-bellied stove in the rear of the store. Shades of Mephistopheles! Another had buried the stock years ago. I've noted many other tales of burying buttons and maybe that accounts for so many buttonwood trees in this vicinity! In many cases I find people still telling what they did with their old buttons—volumes could be written on this alone. However, back to our pilgrimage. We tried next a store several miles distant and there found more than a hundred dozen three-holed buttons, small white ones in the triangular arrangement, six dozen on a small deep blue card, marked three cents a dozen and on the back a stamp patented in England and America. They were of a fine



quality white porcelain. I also found a more translucent button, larger in size, rough and highly glazed. These were poorer in quality, marked made in Germany, selling for three cents a dozen. There were also plenty of color-banded ones at five and ten cents a dozen depending on size. In some localities these color-banded buttons are still being worn—I have seen them on clothing worn in the Pennsylvania Dutch country. (*see Plate 2*).

To go back to the three-hole buttons. It seems as though there are buttons with three holes in alignment, also, being found in bone—a very common type. However, this arrangement never was very satisfactory as every time the needle would pass through the cloth it would weaken the fabric in about the same place. The triangular arrangement of holes is very efficient because it requires less thread than the four-hole button. It is no wonder that C. F. Hathaway, shirtmakers of New York, have patented a new cup-shaped three-hole pearl button for men's shirts. They claim that no matter how hurried a man may be in his dressing in the morning he has no excuse for clumsiness in tearing off the buttons from his shirt as the button is shaped to fit his finger. Mr. Hathaway sent me his patent number as well as samples of the three-hole buttons in all sizes.

I came away from this store with enough three-hole buttons to satisfy all my collector friends and also for those who sent me information regarding this button. I have in my collection of three-hole buttons the following types: cup-shaped milk glass, clambroth, plain and fluted porcelain, bone, black glass—fluted and plain rims, large black glass with gold lustre, color-banded, calico, grey and brown slag, and choice pearl—some carved like petals of flowers, many with radial designs in choice detail. Besides having been used on gloves and baby dresses these small buttons were used on sunbonnets buttoning the brim to the crown. I also noted that this same store had many boxes of overall buttons marked 1879-1880, hundreds of them never out of the boxes. Think of being boxed up all that time!



After lunch Barbara Hill stopped in to see whether I could match a cut steel flower button. Her mother needed one more for the jacket she was making. Hers came from her grandmother's button box. Among my buttons we found the same pattern, mine coming from Iowa, a thousand miles away. Oft-times I have matched up old buttons for friends when they were short a few and planned to wear them. A sort of matching bureau as it were!

After a picnic supper in the vicinity of Newtown, we called on Mrs. Marian Beans who conducts an antique shop there. She also sells buttons, and right here I would like to say that she has the best method of displaying her buttons I have seen anywhere. She has the buttons clipped to double cards which are bound in metal at the top with holes cut through for support on a rack similar to coat hangers. While there I learned there is quite a fad in wearing metal picture buttons which have been made into brooches. What next? Years ago they were made into clasps for collars and belts.

## PLATE 2.

### COMMON CHINA BUTTONS

<i>Row</i>	<i>Classification</i>	<i>Description</i>
A	One-hole	on face (two on back) all colors.
B	Two-hole	2nd button turquoise blue; took 1680 degrees Fahrenheit in firing.
C	Three-hole	Color-banded, plain, colored, fluted rims, calico, stamped and engraved designs.
D	Four-hole	various types.
E	1st button	brass-bound calico—uncommon—others four-hole variety one finds in almost every color.
F	Gaiter and shoe buttons	



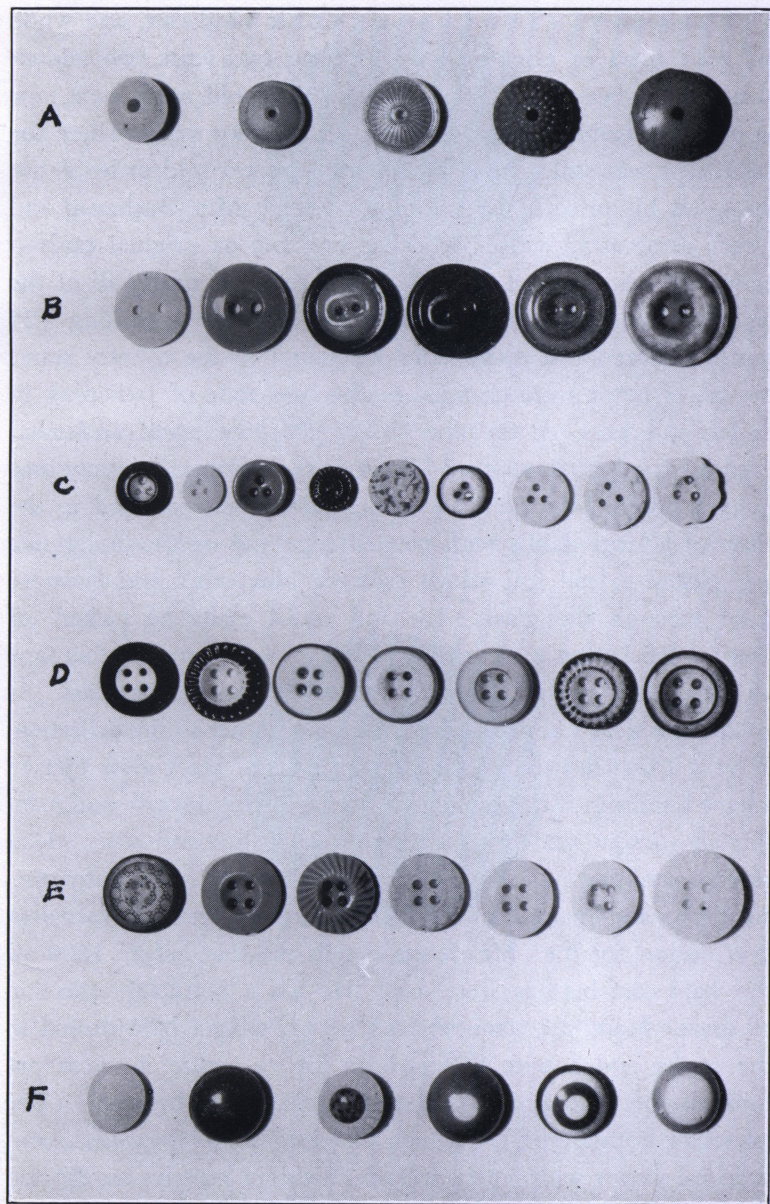


PLATE 2

Buttons illustrated are seven-eighths of actual size



WEDNESDAY.— This day we decided to head east, and while we have lived in Hightstown for twenty-two years, we seldom went off the beaten track and many of these old roads were new to us. We made a good beginning finding two stores where the metal type was still to be had. One storekeeper sold us his entire stock, set his price himself, and my friend, Mrs. Buchanan and I each came away with sixty dozen or more on original cards—many still being priced in shillings. These were nearly all of the type with cut steel embellishment and sold for a shilling (25 cents) a dozen. In many cases we found in the country stores the prices never were changed to the new scale of reckoning in dollars and cents. At the other store I got some lovely old frosted French glass buttons marked "Boutons pour Dames," twenty-four cents a dozen (*see Plate 15. C-5*). These were molded in the form of a large dahlia with petaled edge and on the under side was pasted a lead foil which reflected blue, pink and lavender color through the glass. The foil could easily be picked off leaving the button a clear glass. I have seen many of this type on old button strings. They have a wire shank in the glass. At an antique shop I added many black glass scenes to my collection. Why is it that so many collectors steer clear of black glass (Jets)? I have hundreds with very fine designs showing superb workmanship in design and detail. Here friend husband also added several semi-precious stones to his collection of gems; turquoise, amethyst, and quartz, and I almost forgot a genuine carnelian oval button for me. Mr. Johnson tells me that before 1800 all the waist-coat buttons were oval. He has a beautiful collection of them. Many are semi-precious stones, with a hole drilled in the center and a wire flattened on top to secure it—then put through the hole and turned into a shankloop beneath. (The carnelian is this type.) He has a choice set of six ovals, semi-precious stones with small anchors inlaid in mosaics on the top face, the whole is mounted on a narrow gold rim with shank attached.





PLATE 3.

WASHINGTON PORTRAIT BUTTON  
(Enlarged four times)



PLATE 3.

AMETHYST BLUE GLASS HONEY BEE WITH HONEY COMB  
(Size  $1\frac{1}{2}$ ", convex)

Tonight, in mounting these buttons, I find I have quite a few painted castle scenes on black glass, imprinted on the back 1880. There are some new designs on "Jets" too, cornucopias, eagle's claws, and acanthus leaves. In the French Empire period the aim was to typify victory—so torches, lion and bear claws, and wings, together with the above-mentioned, were in vogue. They also adapted many motifs from Greek and Roman decoration such as honeysuckle, acanthus leaves, pineapples, columns, winged dragons and other fantastic beasts. After the Egyptian campaign many Egyptian motifs were introduced as decorations also.

The designs on these old buttons intrigue me, but I mustn't let myself go in that direction yet.

In a parcel from Florence Garrison of Winchester, Mass., there were many old buttons dating prior to 1890, also a very interesting collection of new buttons finished with the beautiful Monsanto coatings. Pearl buttons in the loveliest shades! The finish of these modern buttons is beautiful and I have mounted a number of cards of this type simply for comparison with the older ones. Today's craftsmen can create and imitate almost every type of older button. When Bert Garrison has a bit of time on his hands I expect that he will assemble all kinds of buttons finished with Monsanto paint and lacquer. Today if one wishes to wear new buttons the variety is endless and the choice large.

THURSDAY.—One must stop scouting long enough to catch up with the household tasks and stir in the garden a bit. With the thermometer at ninety degrees afternoons, I decided to tend to the day's mail which brought several parcels containing buttons from old friends in distant cities. One interesting lot had thirty old bone five-hole buttons, twenty-two of which were different. I have quite an assortment of five-hole buttons in vegetable ivory,



carved pearl, white and dyed bone. An amusing incident happened a week ago when the Baptist Assembly was in session at The Peddie School; in a treasure hunt one of the requirements was a five-hole button. I had no less than a half dozen callers. One boy was a bit skeptical about there being such a button, so with a stone and nail changed a four-hole button into the required type—thus manufacturing one on the spot! From Mrs. Crummet came a number of painted pearls; I find that designs in New England are different from those around here. I have found painted pearls in this locality—the crude, uneven shells were cheap and sold for twelve cents a dozen and the design was just as crude in pattern and workmanship. The better grade pearl with more fire and lustre, sold from twenty-four to seventy cents. These were also more artistically designed. I found out by wearing some of these painted pearls on a summer dress that, among some china decorators of my acquaintance who came over from England to Trenton, there are two whose grandparents lived in Birmingham, England, where they worked at painting buttons in their homes. We compared buttons and found that those handed down through two generations to them are identical in design and material with mine. However, it was not until 1820 that shell buttons were manufactured here in the United States, while fresh water pearls did not make their appearance until 1891. An elderly dressmaker recalls paying as much as seventy cents a dozen for very small painted pearl buttons and she told me they were worn on silk and better dresses. It seems plausible, for this added color was not fired (heated in a kiln) so would not stand either hard wear or repeated washings.

Another parcel contained a number of snail buttons. These are cream colored, about one-half inch thick and show a streak of light through the button. Their comparison in texture is similar to ocean pearls except in shade, as I said before that they are decidedly cream colored, and heavy in appearance.



There were also several portrait buttons of Washington—small black vegetable ivory ones in perfect condition. They show the portrait done by Stuart in 1796. Washington commissioned him to paint portraits of Mrs. Washington and himself. It is this likeness that was reproduced on the former three-cent stamp and one-dollar bill. Washington had just had inserted a new set of false teeth which accounted for the strained expression so noticeable around the mouth and lower part of the face. I was certainly glad to get these buttons, for I haven't seen any just like them anywhere. It has been most difficult to photograph this button so as to do it justice (*see Plate 3*).

From Bertha Heilman of Clinton, N. J. came a number of unusual buttons (*see Plate 9, E-4, F-5*). E-4 is an abalone shell set in a metal back like glass center buttons are mounted, and, F-3 is a beautiful cameo horse. Also, not pictured, are large four-hole smoked pearl buttons entirely set in metal with the holes drilled through the metal as well as the shell.

I always carry a string of old buttons (a representative of each type) in my purse. At church suppers and district club luncheons it has gone up and down the tables, and by the time the meal is over I have located some persons who either have old buttons or can tell me something about them which is just as important. The Clinton buttons came to me in this manner. Then, too, when calling on older ladies this string of buttons has been a wonderful help, for I find when they see some of the buttons...old memories crowd each other...and before you know it I'm busy with pad and pencil.

Today's additions were most unusual and there was great variety. Of course there are always "jets" in these mail packages, but in some localities the patterns are so different, and since I am especially interested in design they will all be mounted in due time. I have been trading by mail for over two years, with many collectors, and I find it a very satisfactory method. Usually I find



these "mail traders" more than fair. Take Edith Hall (known by mail only) of Middletown, Conn., who packs up all her duplicates...sends them by express...and a box one foot square arrives. Then the fun starts!

Others, in trading, number their buttons and in a separate letter write down information regarding them. This I find is a great help where anyone is interested in the case history of a button.

FRIDAY.—This morning's mail brought word of week-end guests, so again housekeeping duties tied me down until well after lunch. This scouting has so gotten into my bones that I suggested then that we try the old store at Etra, New Jersey, about two miles from here. With little hesitation we got into the car and rode out. Mr. Mount's father, Mr. C. W. Mount, a legislator from the district, built the store in 1880, but the button stock dates to an earlier store. The elder Mr. Mount was appointed Postmaster by John Wanamaker, then Postmaster General of the United States. This store continued to be the Post Office until seven years ago, when it was closed. Mr. Syncellus Mount, the present owner, became Postmaster in 1894 and was in office until its closing. I remember that he autographed and cancelled some special covers for Dewy that last day—so he knew Mr. Mount. We found his store closed to keep out the heat but he was inside and very cordial. When he knew that I was interested in getting button information, he took me behind the counter to the old button shelves. (*see Plate 4*). He handed down each box to me, letting me get the price and general information and also giving me a specimen of each button. It was indeed a revelation to me to find that buttons of such choice detail sold for so little money.





PLATE 4.

PICTURE OF OLD BUTTON SHELVES, GENERAL STORE,  
ETRA, NEW JERSEY — Syncellus L. Mount, Proprietor.



— ORIGINAL PRICES —



CALICO  
ALL COLORS  
3¢ DOZ.



BANDED  
ALL COLORS  
10¢ DOZ.



PAINTED PEARL



25¢ DOZ.



TINTED METAL  
12¢

ALL COLORS  
DOZ.

TINTED  
PEWTER  
25¢ DOZ.



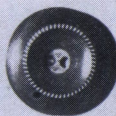
GOLD PLATED  
ALL SIZES  
10¢ TO 18¢ DOZ.



VEG. IVORY  
PIERCED  
12¢ DOZ.



VEG. IVORY  
12¢ DOZ.

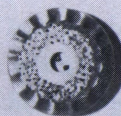


I.R.C. Co  
NOVELTY R.  
1851  
12¢ TO 18¢ DOZ.



PAINTED

TIN BRASS  
ALL COLORS  
10¢ DOZ. 12¢ DOZ.



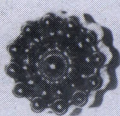
BUFFALO HORN  
INLAY  
15¢ DOZ.



PAINTED  
V. IVORY  
12¢ DOZ.



BUFFALO HOR.  
10¢ DOZ.



15¢ DOZ.

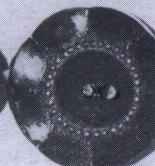


BLACK GLASS

GOLD TRIM 15¢ DOZ.



FLY  
18¢ DOZ.



15¢ DOZ.

L.S.A.

PLATE 5.

ORIGINAL PRICES OF THE BUTTONS FOUND ON THE OLD  
BUTTON SHELVES, GENERAL STORE, ETRA, NEW JERSEY.

Buttons illustrated are seven-eighths of actual size



Considering the limited materials with which the artisans worked in this early period, we find amazing charm and unusual detail. The earlier buttons were hand made and not uniform in size, as machinery was not provided to do more exact work. We found the old tinted shell shape variety with hand soldered shanks—one-piece metal in six colors, a button which is becoming scarcer all the time. (*see Plate 5*). There were black glass and lovely tinted pewter buttons in great variety and style; also smoked and ocean pearl mounted on stiff red silver foil. All the older button cards were marked in shillings and pence and many boxes had not been opened in a generation or two.

The owner, Mr. Mount, recalled never having bought any buttons on that  $4\frac{1}{2} \times 5$ -foot shelf. Mr. Dean, of our high school faculty, came out with us and photographed the old shelves and also the accompanying card of buttons that are samples of those found in the old store with the original prices. In many cases the patent year was printed on the card, so one can obtain an approximate date for these buttons. There were hundreds of calico and color banded ones, painted pearls, silver and gold plated buttons in many designs still wrapped in the original blue and white tissue paper to keep them from tarnishing.

There are dyed vegetable ivory and bone buttons, too, and these are still as fine in color and texture as they were when placed on those shelves long ago. There are metals with embossed designs tinted in many colors, bronze and silver finishes, and cut steel inlays. Hard rubber buttons with the Goodyear patent date mark stamped on both cards and buttons, two dozen buttons to the card and the size of a nickel sold for fifteen cents a dozen. (*see Plate 5*). There are colorful ones in buffalo horn inlays dated patented 1871-75. Buffalo horn buttons are much commoner in the country stores than in the city stores. They were made by cooking the hoofs and horns of animals, dyed and while soft pressed into molds. These buttons usually ranged in price



from fifteen to thirty cents a dozen, size and design altering prices.

There are a few of the lovelier old laminated and inlaid horn and tortoise shell buttons one finds in grand-mamma's box. I have a rather choice plate of these buttons. These tiny intricate designs showed skilled craftsmen were employed. One button shows a bird in mother-of-pearl with the tiny bill in silver, hovering over a spray of flowers in silver inlay; others show conventional and geometric patterns regularly placed, floral designs, hit and miss patterns. I have come across very few of these on original cards; most of mine came from older people and I feel certain they are of a much earlier date—about 1840. (*see Plate 16, C and D* ).

Today's treasure shelves uncovered much information and this old store certainly has the right atmosphere. I know I shall come out here many times to visit Mr. Mount and gaze fondly upon these old buttons. While I worked for hours at the old shelves, Dewy went with an old collector of Indian relics to see his collection and came back with a number of items for his own small one, and also an old Revolutionary War button. It may be the earliest of that type that he has. (*see Plate 18, A-1* ).

I'm afraid after today I'll never be the same—those old button shelves did something to me. I'm glad there are still places in this busy world where we can forget time passes so swiftly.

P. S.: Took my old school friend, Julia Coleman (McNeill), out to meet Mr. Mount and see the old button shelves, and the following lines are from her pen.

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A condensation of this article, by the author, appeared in *Hobbies*, January, 1941 number.

## CORNER FOR BUTTONS

*There's a friendly old store by the side of the road  
 With a corner inside that deserves an ode,  
 But since I'm a rhymster—not a poet, alas,  
 I must jingle out its fame in the doggerel class!*

*Syncellus L. Mount is proprietor here  
 And his corner for buttons has an "atmosphere"...  
 It clings to the boxes, time-stained, dusty and dark,  
 And the prices are in shillings! Here's a real button lark.*

*Take a peek—in his boxes you will find painted pearl;  
 Color-banded, calicos, Mother wore as a girl.  
 Here are tin shell painted; Goodyear Rubber, and "jets";  
 Deerhorn, bone, walrus too, from his corner one gets.*

*Vegetable ivory—dyed, plain; ocean pearl—smoked, white;  
 Metal flower basque buttons—a Collector's delight!  
 Picture buttons with scenes, and some metal heads too,  
 Are included in this charming Button Corner for you.*

—JULIA COLEMAN

## PLATE 6.

## ALL BLACK GLASS (except E-3)

Row	No.	Classification	Description
A	1	Two-colored	Insert, one hole on face, two on back.
	2	Hand-painted	Decoration fired, two-hole.
	3	Lustre	Face design, three-hole
	4	Cut-out	Four-hole.
B	1	Hand-painted	Fired, cornucopia recessed design.
	2	Hand-painted	Fired, lustre gloss on flower.
	3	Hand-painted	Recessed castle, gold and bronze fired, other colors unfired.



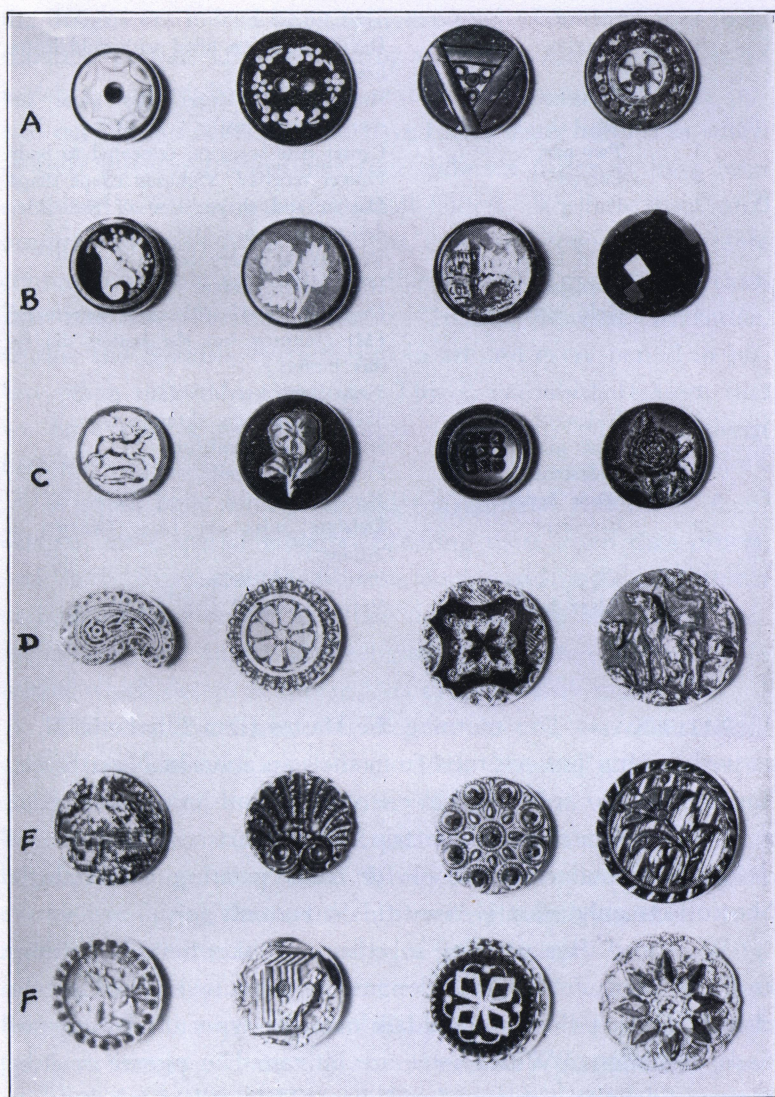


PLATE 6

Buttons illustrated are seven-eighths of actual size



	4	Faceted	"Jet".
C	1	Intaglio	Deer, depression filled with gold lustre, fired.
	2	Escutcheon	Brass pansy, large brass plate and shank—very fine.
	3	Two-part	Center disc separate, cemented to body.
	4	Carved	Flower recessed, Victorian coupe shape.
D	1	Paisley	Design and shape; one of the oldest designs known.
	2	Gold lustre	Very thick, heavy button.
	3	Gold lustre	High relief design.
	4	Gold lustre	Dogs in relief, iridescent background. (Mr. Johnson has the button die for this button.)
E	1	Iridescent	Swiss scene, vivid color.
	2	Iridescent	Shell-shaped, sew through type.
	3	Blue glass	Silver-faced, beautiful.
	4	Iridescent	Floral, fine detail.
F	1	Silver lustre	Floral, Victorian coupe shape.
	2	Iridescent	Delicate color on face. (known as Tiffany.)
	3	Silver lustre	Fine etched design.
	4	Silver lustre	Very fine detail.

SATURDAY.—This morning the Hastes from Elizabeth, N. J. arrived, having just returned from their vacation in Nova Scotia. Laura Haste is one of my newest converts and brought me quite a lot of duplicates from the trip. She is a teacher of art and design and conducts a school for china painting in Elizabeth. She collects only what is beautiful in buttons.

We spend days working together over sketches for etchings and new plans for applied designs on china to be used in our classes. During this time we talk over the types of designs one finds on buttons. Where some are interested in picture or story buttons—definite pictures which immediately call to mind stories read in childhood—we are interested more in general design, proportion, and materials used. By examining these ordinary black glass ("Jets") and metal buttons more carefully we find



the designs are indeed beautifully executed. We think that these common buttons also are worthy of praise for the manner in which symmetry, balance, and perfect detail work has been carried out. In our collections we have found many buttons in which at least three and sometimes four different materials have been combined to make up a very small button. We have also listed examples of many types of designs, especially found on the more conventional style of button, in their order: Egyptian, Babylonian, Assyrian, Persian, Chinese, Grecian, Roman, Byzantine, Gothic and Spanish, every design in art and every period in history being reflected on buttons. This is one of the reasons that we have such a wide assortment of patterns on conventional buttons.

We find both naturalistic and conventional patterns in floral designs, some special subjects appearing more often than others, such as the forget-me-not; the rose, double and single, full grown or bud; and the daisy. Also one finds separate patterns in geometric lines and angles, and religious and military symbols. No matter which design is chosen it is executed with much skill.

With the old Greek and Roman designs, the Renaissance artists tried to make everything rightly balanced—the Baroque styles tried to outdo even nature. It took what was grand and big in the Renaissance period and made it even grander and bigger, to the eye, at any rate. It was the first style that was used everywhere during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It is a style so fantastic and “overloaded” that usually it offends the rules of simplicity and good taste. Louis XIV was the greatest Baroque king that ever lived—he supplied the idea of the largest palace in Europe. It was this same Louis XIV that had the great weakness for buttons. We read that during his lifetime he spent \$5,000,000 on buttons and in one year alone, \$600,000.

We have come to the conclusion that the systematic arrangement for the purpose of attaining beauty is art in buttons. Beauty



in buttons is the feeling of pleasure or satisfaction derived from a group of objective qualities in the outside composition itself. Fashion in buttons is the prevailing style of art either in pure or applied forms.

Among the buttons Laura brought today there was a small rose center insert in a transparent amber glass with a faceted collet diamond pattern, and a small metal European shank. (*see Plate 17, E-2.*) The clear glass top insert is molded on the under side in the design of a rose, then filled in with color, inserted and cemented to the amber base. Last fall I bought some modern glass buttons made in a similar manner—they were very beautiful but had a glass shank. These new ones I purchased at Niederman's in Philadelphia for about twenty-five cents each. Again I mounted these new ones for comparison. There were seven other paperweight buttons, the choicest of all being that lovely unfolding rosebud. The method in making this type button was very ingenious and similar to that of the much sought after paperweight.

Many of the old-fashioned paperweights we see in museums today were made around 1850. The term milleflori (thousand flowers) is given to the type paperweight that is filled with designs made up of miniature patterns resembling almost every subject, such as: flowers arranged singly or in bouquet fashion; loop patterns which resemble tattings and laces; also geometric lines and curves, spirals and figures. Some of the more uncommon ones are those containing small animal designs—dogs, lambs, squirrels, cocks and monkeys. A very outstanding one is a beautiful sail-boat on a pale blue sea and still another, a portrait medallion with a white pottery cameo of Benjamin Franklin encased in it.

It is said that paperweights originated in the St. Louis factory, Alsace-Lorraine, and were copied by other craftsmen. Some early specimens made by Baccarat are dated B-1857 or 1849. The



sections at the base of the paperweights which contained the designs were called the "set-ups." It was a very slow and painstaking process to attach these little "set-ups" to the clear or colored glass top for each had to be exactly the same temperature when joined or cracks would occur, also the cooling process was a slow and careful one for the same reason. From France the art of making these beautiful paperweights was carried to Great Britain and there they were made in a number of the industrial cities. Later the idea was brought to America where a number of glass factories were in operation. They were made by M. Pierre of the New England Glass Co., the South Ferry Flint Glass Works of John A. Gillerland, Brooklyn, N. Y., and by the Sandwich Glass Co. In Pittsburgh, also, many lovely paperweights were made and Millville, N. J. is famous for the pink rose "set-up."

I have seen many beautiful paperweights and have examined quite a number, comparing them with their miniatures in buttons. It is little wonder that these beautiful buttons head the list.

Among the buttons Laura brought today are the following: a small triangular shaped paperweight type button with a rather rough, unfinished base into which a metal shank had been inserted; the original price was fifty cents a dozen and the card was marked, *Nouveaute de Paris*. These cards were bought in 1905, and there was variety in design, the buttons being multi-colored with much goldstone added. Another outstanding button is a large clambroth convex with a heavy shank, on the face of which is a hand-painted horse's head that has been lightly fired (*see Plate 7, E-1*). This type is uncommon although I have many clambroth ones with designs on the face filled in with gold leaf or colored pigment.

There are other beautiful escutcheon type buttons with animals, fruits, and scenes with a background of light, hard, clear wood—possibly apple, holly or laurel. Many of these are the very large size and beautifully proportioned.



She also brought me a report on calico buttons. Some collectors call them glass, others china. . . we ought to get together on what we think they really are. The following are the results of the experiment. She placed buttons at various places in the kiln where temperatures vary a bit because of draft placement, etc. The calico button (*see Plate 13, No. 4*) was placed in the middle of the kiln where the heat was about 1480 degrees Fahrenheit. It was unharmed and unchanged. The others that were placed with the little turquoise blue button (*see Plate 2, B-2*) in the hottest part of the kiln (between 1580 and 1680 degrees Fahrenheit) were also unharmed. All of these buttons took the high firing given to china and came through unchanged in decoration and shape. The Tatler Decorating Company of Trenton, New Jersey (they fire my studio china) use two kilns in firing glass and china articles. Their glass is fired at a much lower temperature than china, and I have seen glass articles that were overfired to the detriment of both shape and decoration. (1094 degrees Fahrenheit is about the right heat for the firing of glass.) She also placed eight buttons, commonly called glass, in small wells made from clay and fired her kiln for china, to about 1580 degrees Fahrenheit. Buttons No. 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, clear and colored glass, regardless of where she placed them, lost their shape and melted completely. Nos. 3 and 4, the common two and four-hole variety, on Plate 2 (*B-4 and B-2*), stood up well, proving almost without a doubt that these are china buttons.

I almost forgot to tell you that she brought Dewy a number of tiny watch keys to be added to his collection of chain-drive watches, and the most peculiar pair of old eye spectacles—that collection is growing, having already passed the fifty mark.

Tonight I gave final instructions to our neighbors, the Engles, who leave for a vacation in Michigan. I suppose many of you have done the same—asked your friends to look in their relatives' old button boxes in different localities in hope there will be something brought back that you do not have.



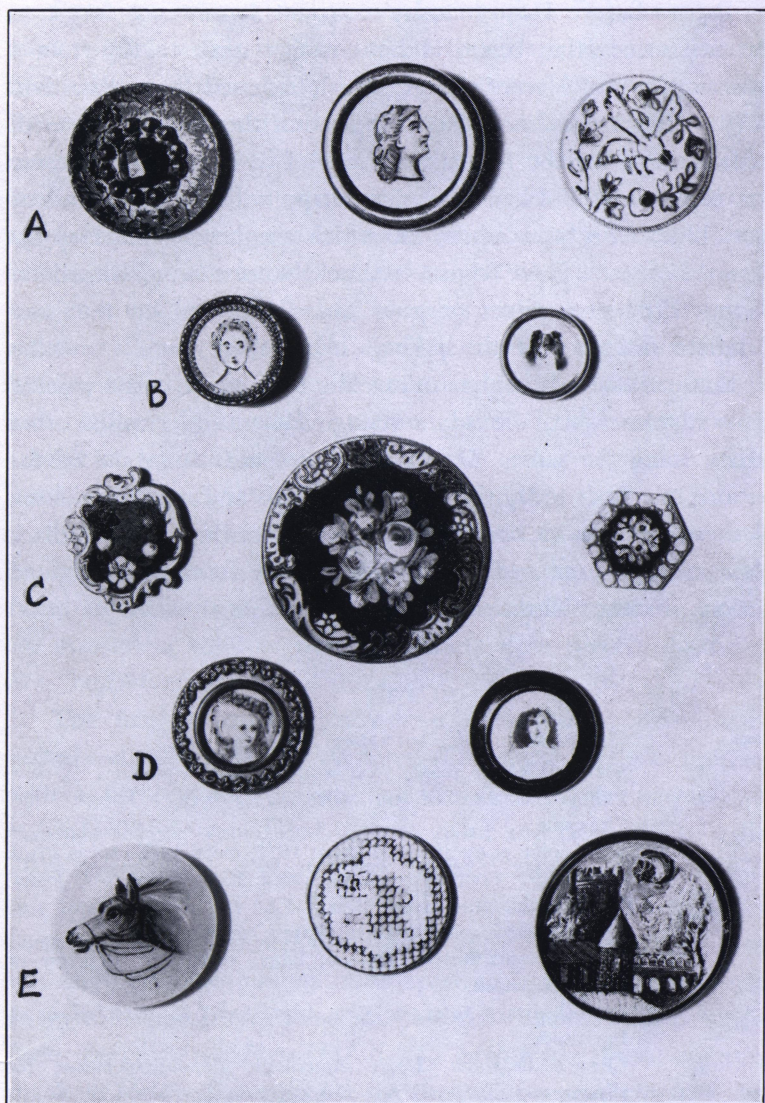


PLATE 7

Buttons illustrated are seven-eighths of actual size



P. S.— Before I finish today's account I must not forget to mention some other beautiful buttons that came to me from a charming lady, 88 years of age, who purchased them abroad in 1878. They are enamelled on copper and then heavily silvered. In fact, these are the first silvered ones I've had. They measure one inch across and are convex in shape with a background of light blue, ivory and white, on which are hand-painted sprays of wild roses. These choice enamel buttons were sometimes plated with either silver or gold and were worn on the most elaborate costumes of the period. Also, there were a number of hand-painted black glass ones. She told me that she painted many buttons when she was a young woman and recalled other artists doing the same. That possibly accounts for some of the buttons one finds today that are done in oils and not fired. Some of these given to me are beautiful painted castle scenes on black glass in both large and small sizes. I have found hand-painted designs in other localities but never on original cards.

#### PLATE 7.

Row	No.	Classification and Description
A	1	Victorian coupe shape, steel studded, fine detail.
	2	Lithograph varnished, tin collet, string back.
	3	Cloisonne
B	1	Multi-color print, invented about 1822, metal back canvas shank after 1825. Courtesy Sarah Buchanan, Hightstown, New Jersey.
	2	Ivory miniature.
C	1	Enamel heavy coating, shield-shaped, unusual.
	2	Enamel colors heavily applied, large, very fine. Courtesy of Sarah Buchanan.
	3	Enamel, heavy turquoise blue edge, fine. Courtesy of Sarah Buchanan.
D	1	Chrome-lithograph, Marie Antoinette, decorative button for slipper.
	2	Ivoroid portrait, about 1890.
E	1	Clambroth with shank, fired design, very fine.
	2	French china center, fired, backed, brass collet.
	3	Black glass, 1880 on back, fired for gold outline, scene painted in oil colors unfired.



SUNDAY.—At church this morning Ada Dey, one of my most helpful button friends (several years ago she gave me her fine old button string), told me where I could get another one. This next one I expect to keep intact so that I may exhibit a genuine one—nothing added—nothing taken away. I can hardly wait to see it! But I must remember not to let this hobby become an obsession! During the summer I have located a dozen or more button strings and have examined several of them. One is very lovely; it has beautiful heads, one very choice one of Homer in cameo shell, very exquisite in detail and in very high relief, black glass with white porcelain heads, many-jeweled waistcoat kind, horn inlays, and animals in natural horn. I expect to have an exhibit of buttons in January and shall gather all I can in the community here.

Later in the afternoon a collector friend from a nearby town brought her buttons. It was amazing to find that she had several faked reproductions. She buys most of her buttons and among the assortment she had purchased lately were several she called her "best" buttons. I will mention three types.

The first, a paperweight button, which upon examination turned out to be made in two parts. The upper half was rounded with a flat bottom into which a design of three flowers was pressed. These were filled in with paint and cemented to a flat glass bottom with a glass shank. I have seen many buttons of this type before. In fact I still have part of a card I bought for forty-nine cents a dozen three years ago. Every time the dress was laundered the buttons came apart so I never used the rest. In my collection I have some two-part glass buttons with beautiful little designs (*see Plate 17, E-2*), having the European type shank in metal. Some people list these as paperweight type, but I feel that a true paperweight button should be in one piece—

- (a) having a solid color base with a wire shank;
- (b) swirl back with a wire shank;



- (c) small brass shankplate and shank;
- (d) solid color at base, small shankplate and shank;
- (e) opaque glass with radiant color near surface or preformed design set in top.

I have examined specimens in the following shapes: globular, faceted, domed, molded, or concave. I see no reason why they should have to be in clear glass only, for some of the large paperweights I have examined are of dark glass background with flowers of pastel shade arranged in bouquet fashion in the upper half. I have miniatures of this same type in buttons and only last week saw six beauties, the largest I have ever seen. The lady owning them told me her mother paid a dollar a piece for them many years ago. I am anxious to hear what some of my readers think about these opaque buttons, I list as paperweight. (*see Plate 17, F-1* ).

The second was a glass button with color-painted triangular sections underneath. This type also I have seen in the stores lately. The button it was meant to imitate was what Mr. Johnson named the kaleidoscope button, because in looking at it the reflection shows symmetrical arrangement of designs in many colors. (*see Plate 17, Row D*). This name, given to K's by Mr. David Johnson, fits the button so well that among collectors it is now widely used. This older button was made in two parts; the top of the upper half was oftentimes cut on the top surface, star fashion, faceted, flattened, center small concave, or plain dome-shaped or convex. The bottom of this upper half was entirely smooth and flat. The lower part of the button consisted of a large metal shankplate covering the entire bottom, with a wire loop fastened to it. Over this metal shankplate was laid a pigment foil in beautiful colors. Then the button was cemented together. Through the passing years the cement has lost its grip, so that on old button strings and in old button boxes one finds many shankplate bottoms without the glass tops. I have some



lovely old ones with the following designs: scotch plaids, stars, the cross in its many types, dots, every geometrical figure, animals, and even dainty forget-me-nots with the inscription "Forget me not."

Sir David Brewster of England invented the Kaleidoscope in 1814, and whether the artist who designed these buttons got his many patterns from it or not we do not know.

The third button was a tin-type button. This one was genuinely faked. An old button mounting was used and a head cut from an old tin-type was inserted. Under a magnifying glass it was easily detected. It seems more difficult to find tin-type buttons than other types as many have been ruined by exposure to light. Just last summer I got two and after having them around in the bright sunlight for a while it wasn't long before I discovered that the picture had almost faded out entirely. However, there seem to be different types in this field also. Various methods were discovered between 1839 and 1873 in France, England and America, whereby the photographic processes of printing this type became more permanent. Where political campaign buttons are still to be found one can authentically date these. In many cases the older members of the family recall the faces on the old tin-type buttons and this gives one an idea of their age.

There was also an "ivoroid" button on which one finds pictures of actresses and famous singers about 1890. (*see Plate 7, D-2*).

The chrome lithograph buttons my friend had are worthy of mention. Most of hers were covered with celluloid as is the one I have pictured on (*Plate 11, A-3*). Celluloid was invented in 1870, so it would appear that these buttons come after that. Many people class this type button earlier because of the costumes that are worn or styles of hair and head dress. You should keep in mind that there was a definite swing back to the styles of the



Louis' along about the '80's, for at the World's Fair held in Paris in 1889, "Americans who visited it, started their planning of home furnishings in these styles. So during those years since 1889, many rooms in the homes of the wealthy, many ball-rooms and reception rooms have been decorated and furnished in these styles."\* It is only natural in reviving the styles in furniture of an earlier period that pictures and portraits are given much prominence also. And so it follows that these same pictures and portraits were reproduced in miniature form on brooches and buttons.

In his book, *A Complete Course of Lithography—Der Stein-druck* (1818), Alois Senefelder sets forth the facts of his invention. The early prints were large and large portfolios of national and private collections were issued, became immediately popular, and the fashion spread quickly to other countries. By 1850, lithography in England was really a finished chapter of illustrative art. In France, too, it met with splendid response. In America it was used commercially save for a few stray prints by La Farge, William Morris Hunt and Winslow Homer. By the middle of the century the first great period of the art of lithography was everywhere at an end. Photography became its serious rival, bringing its disastrous gift of cheapness. In the '60's photo-lithographs were finding their way into Baron Taylor's monumental work. In France and England, in the '60's and '70's, lithography was again being re-discovered by a number of great artists, among them was Whistler, who produced little masterpieces that made talk in the studios. And so, little by little, lithography as an art came into its own again, especially in France where a retrospective exhibition of lithographs was held at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in 1891.

Before 1910, to make a reproduction in color it was not uncommon to have as many as twenty printings, each of a dif-

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\* *Economics of Fashion*—Paul H. Nystrom. Published by The Ronald Press, New York.



ferent color or print. It would seem as if many of our chrome-lithograph buttons would come under this latter period.

At our son's graduation from Haverford College, we stayed for several days in a very lovely Quaker home, and this charming older lady gave me a number of very fine old buttons. One of them, the little fox, is a chrome-lithograph picture covered with a glass disc and then cemented to a blue steel plate. (*see Plate 8, C-5*) The button on Plate 7 (A-2) is a similar type, small head and wide border of plain color, except that this button is simply a lithograph without color added or a glass covering. It seems to have been varnished to protect the surface a bit, and is in very fine condition. This button has a string back. It came from my friend, Mrs. Henry Mount, who although past seventy, started a collection of buttons.

We expect to go in to New York tomorrow; have packed the bags and made plans to stay for the week if necessary. We are counting on its being cooler there in the stone buildings of the Museum—at any rate there will be so much to see that we will forget the weather. So tonight we're giving plenty of instructions to the college son who will carry on in our absence. And how! He is doing some graduate work in a nearby town and will be home late afternoons when he usually plays tennis. At least there will be someone to look after Patty (the collie) and take in the buttons that arrive.

P. S.—A box of duplicates came yesterday from Mae Walton, wife of the Dean of Albright College. About a month ago we unexpectedly ran into the Waltons at Lester's Place (a restaurant and early American antique shop) near Pottstown, Penna. There was just time enough to show her my button string and give her some duplicates before we parted. She became an immediate convert and before she left that place had obtained a beautiful paperweight button from the proprietor's mother!



## PLATE 8.

Since this Plate represents so many types of buttons,  
I would like to suggest the following values for them.

SCENES				
Row	No.	Classification and Description	Size	Price
A	1	Metal tinted, mirror back	$\frac{1}{2}$ "	15c
	2	Metal, lead escutcheon, brass collet.	$\frac{1}{2}$ "	15c
	3	Black glass, iridescent scene.	$\frac{5}{8}$ "	20c
	4	Ruby glass, design filled in with gold	$\frac{5}{8}$ "	25c
	5	Metal, Victorian coupe shape, printed design	$\frac{3}{4}$ "	35c
ANIMALS				
B	1	Tinted brass, horse and jockey.	$\frac{5}{8}$ "	25c
	2	Brass, sporting.	$\frac{5}{8}$ "	35c
	3	Brass, animal head.	$\frac{1}{2}$ "	25c
	4	Tinted metal, screen type, lion	$\frac{5}{8}$ "	20c
	5	Tinted metal, screen type, mountain goat.	$\frac{5}{8}$ "	20c
ANIMALS AND INSECTS				
C	1	White metal, escutcheon head, cut steel eyes.	$\frac{1}{2}$ "	25c
	2	Black glass, intaglio fly, gold lustre, fired.	$\frac{1}{2}$ "	20c
	3	Tinted Britannia metal, butterfly escutcheon, Victorian coupe shape	$\frac{3}{4}$ "	35c
	4	Black glass rabbit, gold lustre fired.	$\frac{5}{8}$ "	20c
	5	Chrome-lithograph, fox—lovely.	$\frac{3}{4}$ "	75c
D	1	Black glass cat, silver lustre face, fired	$\frac{3}{4}$ "	40c
	2	Black glass elephant, silver and gold lustre, fired; other colors unfired.	$\frac{3}{4}$ "	35c
	3	Black glass spider, iridescent lustre, fired.	$\frac{5}{8}$ "	20c
	4	Black glass, three owls, iridescent and copper bronze fired.	$\frac{5}{8}$ "	35c
	5	Black glass, wild boar, silver lustre, fired	$\frac{3}{4}$ "	40c
BIRDS				
E	1	Brass one-piece, Victorian coupe shape, escutcheon, fine detail, milled edge	$\frac{3}{4}$ "	50c
	2	White metal one-piece, Victorian coupe shape, brass escutcheon steel studded. (Very fine detail)	$\frac{3}{4}$ "	50c
	3	One-piece metal engraved, Sheffield.	$\frac{3}{4}$ "	50c
	4	Two-piece metal, tinted, owl and 13 stars.	$\frac{5}{8}$ "	35c
	5	White metal, brass escutcheon.	$\frac{5}{8}$ "	20c
PASTIMES				
F		All solid brass, pressed and pierced designs	$\frac{3}{4}$ "	50c



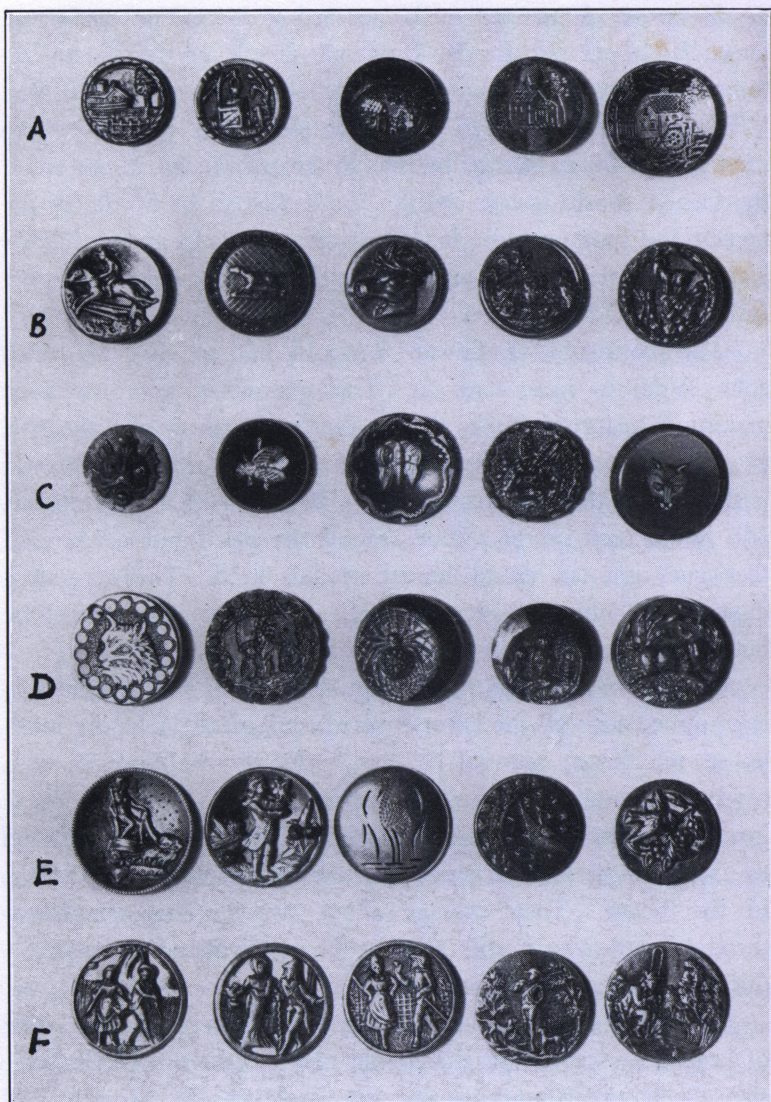


PLATE 8

Buttons illustrated are seven-eighths of actual size



MONDAY, August 19.—We arrived in New York early and immediately set out for B. Blumenthal & Company, manufacturers, importers and exporters of La Mode Buttons and Buckles. "They are the creators of these buttons which are among the most beautifully fashioned buttons in America today. Since 1877, the fashion world in this country has looked to La Mode for the newest and most inspired button originals to help make milady's wardrobe more individual, more thrilling and definitely more fashion-right."\*

The president, Mr. Edward Leopold, had assigned Mr. Malcolm Weill to look after us. This gentleman, too, has been making a historical survey of the buttons worn during the past 80 years. *The Cavalcade of Button Fashions in American History* is the title of this research edited by B. Blumenthal & Company. Mr. Weill took us on a tour around the place and we saw all that goes into an establishment of this kind. The decorating department interested me especially, for there one can have buttons "doctored" to match any outfit.

This plant occupies 38,000 square feet and the organization is equipped with all the latest modern equipment, including inter-house telephone, auto-call system, scientific lighting, modern inventory system occupying a separate office controlled by a group of girls who are constantly kept busy keeping records up to date so there is an accurate check at all times of every button in the house. They average about two hundred employees throughout the year, this amount being increased considerably during the heavy rush periods.

In cases placed on the wall we saw a marvelous exhibition of beautifully carved pearl buttons; many were in the very large size. Such superb workmanship one could hardly expect to find elsewhere. It is little wonder that they are valued at \$25,000 and are marked with special honors from the Exposition held in Paris in 1878.

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\* *The Cavalcade of Button Fashions*—B. Blumenthal & Company.



I know they are by far some of the most exquisite specimens of pearl buttons I have ever seen. These choice pearl buttons came from Java and Dutch Guiana, and are very white with much fire and lustre, and the back of the button is almost as lovely, as is the case with all the better grade pearl buttons.

I had never known before that buttons were made from snail shells. We were told that some snails have spiral shells and others are cup-shaped, tubular or plate-like. The snail buttons in this case were large ones, too, about an inch in diameter, as I recall, thick, heavy, cream-colored, verging on yellow iridescent rounded buttons. The shell on exhibition from which some of the pearl buttons were cut out is very large. There is also a variety that occurs along the west coast of America and from Panama to Vancouver, and supplies Panama shell and some pearls. These often attain a diameter of a foot and a pair of shells oft-times weighs 10 lbs. This is the most valuable species of mother-of-pearl oyster. The large heavier buttons were cut from the heel of the shell where the pearl is very thick.

We saw many beautiful buttons, for here one can find almost every type known, and we were shown every courtesy by both the president and Mr. Weill, and I shall remember this visit for it marks one of the brightest spots in my collecting career. Before we left, Mr. Weill gave us addresses of old costume establishments and seamstresses. We plan to visit these places during the week.

We found that Cooper Union is closed during vacation, so that pilgrimage will have to come in September when it opens. Here we had to take time out to get settled, and my "fair"-minded husband decided we should go out there for the afternoon and evening. He just loves that place, and what he'll ever do without a World's Fair next year I can't imagine. Maybe he'll have to get himself another hobby—number 15!

The following article is reprinted by the permission of B. Blumenthal & Company.



"1860-1879 — This period of American history is almost within living memory. Yet the changes which started then were to transform the world. It was the beginning of the great era of invention. Travel facilities were improved with the introduction of the Pullman car. Dress underwent a transition from romantic picture book crinolines into fashions which many moderns can remember. The sewing machine speeded up dressmaking. Edison perfected the electric light.

"This changing picture is seen on the buttons of the period. At the beginning, color was lacking in buttons. Metals were the vogue, and designers ingeniously used them in many ways. Raised or embossed designs made by molding or pouring were often seen. Tiny miniatures painted on china were set in metal rims which often were beautifully worked. Bronze finishes were popular, and cut steel was making its first appearance. Considering the limited materials with which artisans worked, we find amazing variety and charm in buttons of this day. But the construction of these buttons often looked "hand-made" or home-made. Backs were not beautifully finished and neatly polished. This was to come later when machinery provided man with more exact tools.

"1880-1899 — This period is in touch with our modern times. Many familiar sign-posts stand out in history. Bicycling was in vogue. Henry Ford introduced his first motor car. Marconi perfected the wireless. And it was a time of great elegance in dress.

"It was the Victorian era of mutton-leg sleeves, ostrich plumed hats, hansom cabs. Elaborate and beautiful buttons fit into this picture. Enamels were in fashion, and this medium allowed brilliant colors and striking designs. Elaborate workmanship is often seen in the buttons of this period which are treasured in button collections. Cut steel lent its ornate glitter to the lavish mode. It was used in tiny buttons, or in large showy buttons, often combined with brilliants or pearls. Shell buttons were inlaid with contrasting steel which might be handsomely



carved. America was feeling rich and prosperous, and the buttons of this time reflect this luxury.

"1900-1919 — Now we're getting close to the present. Grandfather, and father too, may remember when the Floradora Sextette was the toast of New York. Mother knows about the Gibson Girl fashions or shirtwaist vogue. Inventions were forging ahead. The electric street car brought new convenience to thousands. The Wright Brothers flew the first airplane. Movies flickered into public consciousness.

"And how about fashions? The 20-year span began with mutton-leg sleeves and ended with the straight-and-narrow silhouette, at the close of the World War. Buttons advanced with fashions. The early part of the century was the great jet era. Jet was used in quantities, and often combined with cut steel. Crocheted buttons, buttons covered with satin, silk, velvet and braid were also used to give a lavish touch to clothes. Porcelain buttons, now practically unknown, were widely favored on wash frocks and other utility dresses. Toward the end of the period, celluloid buttons grew in popularity and were later supplanted by galalith buttons, made from sour milk. This was one of the first of the new plastics which were to give creative and style arts a new medium.

"1920-1939 — The pace of the times becomes faster. Inventions have grown from breathtaking miracles into accepted everyday use. Dressmaking has developed into a vast national business under modern methods. The names of the French model makers, like Schiaparelli, Le Long, etc., became familiar to Main Street.

"The buttons of this period show a great ingenuity in design and material. Plastics offered endless variety. They were dyed in every possible color, finished to represent wood, marble, pearl, ivory, metals. They were molded, carved. In addition, we see the rise of novelties. Nuts, whole shells, cork and wood are made into interesting looking buttons, keyed to the style and



type of the costume. Even rope and straw were knotted or braided to make button trimmings that were new and different looking. Women borrowed studs and links from men's fashions to decorate blouses and shirtwaist frocks.

"1940 — We are now in an era of great creative style. Clothes in general are functional . . . brightened with imagination. Designers take their inspiration from every source . . . the sea, the sky, the earth . . . our occupations, hobbies, recreations.

"And as a fashion accessory, buttons reflect this vast scope. Shapes range from realistic copies of things we know in nature, to stylized patterns created by the ruler and compass. Materials are shell, wood, cork, metals, and the vast new medium of plastics.

"Today, buttons are as important to fashions as jewelry. Smart women know that unusual and original buttons can transform a simple frock into a costume. Perhaps you have discovered how quickly merely changing the buttons on a dress can make last year's frock look like a newcomer."

## PLATE 9.

### PEARL BUTTONS

<i>Row</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Classification and Description</i>
A	1	Snail—very thick deep cream iridescent color.
	2	Hand-painted—crude—original price 12 cents a dozen.
	3	Hand-painted—crude—original price 15 cents a dozen.
	4	Smoked—fish eye—original price 24 cents a dozen.
B	1	Ocean pearl—very old—mounted on stiff red metal foil—priced at 1 shilling a dozen.
	2	Printed—from New England locality.
	3	Dyed rim—center mother-of-pearl, inscribed.
	4	Enameled—raised design with gold leaf—lovely. Marked: Boutons Perle Fantaisie. Patented in England and America.
Breuetes S G D G		
F B		
(showing 8 medals with dates 1851-53-52-49-65), no price. Found by Dorothy Lloyd of Hamburg, Penna.		
C	1	Smoked—inscribed, having mirror inlays.



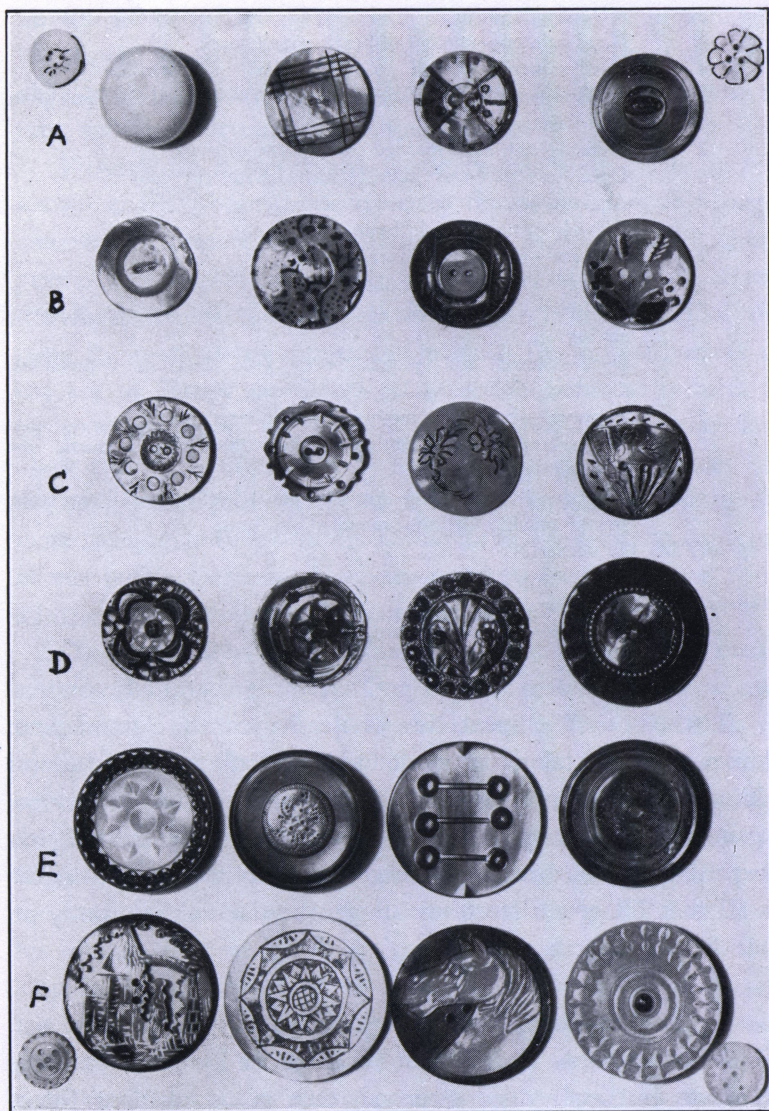


PLATE 9

Buttons illustrated are seven-eighths of actual size



- 2 Pierced—fine detail.
  - 3 Hand-painted—mother-of-pearl shank back.
  - 4 Dyed—inscribed, with gold leaf filled in depressions.
  - D 1 Smoked—made of combination of steel, mother-of-pearl, in four layers.
  - 2 Pierced—cut steel-studded, sew through type.
  - 3 Dyed—set in brass plate, studded with cut steel.
  - 4 Abalone—center, crimped steel edge.
  - E 1 Carved—metal-backed, brass collet.
  - 2 Abalone—rim, coin silver center.
  - 3 Smoked—6-hole decorative button.
  - 4 Abalone—metal-backed, brass collet, in the manner of jewel setting.
  - F 1 Dyed—carved and pierced with gold leaf in depressions. Courtesy of Dorothy Lloyd, Hamburg, Penna.
  - 2 Engraved—by hand, mother-of-pearl, large shank.
  - 3 Cameo type—horse mother-of-pearl, base smoked pearl, sew through type.
  - 4 Carved—Revolutionary Army overcoat button, with very large, heavy shank. Oftimes mounted in brass.
- Top of Plate (in corners)*  
Engraved—3-hole buttons, very fine.
- Bottom of Plate (in corners)*  
Engraved—5-hole buttons, crude.

TUESDAY — We spent the whole day in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, taking time out for lunch only, and they almost closed the doors on us at that. We plan to go back tomorrow again, so I will let my notes of today carry over until then. It was surprisingly cool there, but tonight it is so warm here in the hotel that I'd give almost anything to be out in the country on our sleeping porch.

WEDNESDAY — For the past two days we have arrived at the Museum just as the doors opened, each of us having a list of special exhibits we planned to see if time permitted. There are so many educational features connected with places like these where articles pertaining to art, science or other fields of human



interest are displayed. Here are exhibited many things not to be glanced at and cast aside after a brief inspection, as is the daily paper; they are to be looked at and studied from time to time with an ever increasing admiration.

Pictures are a recognized factor in education. The fact is known and has been seized upon by the newspapers and magazines of the present day, and the country is flooded with cheap prints, lithographs, engravings, and pen-and-ink and crayon drawings. This is an inexpensive way of bringing before the mind the most distant scenes and places. The far-off horrors of the war in Europe are shown to us in one glance at pictures in our morning paper. Or, we may go back thousands of years and know just how people and places looked in the early ages. If the rude prints and sketches teach us so much, how infinitely more refining and elevating is a study of the fine arts as collected in our public galleries. Here among the portraits of the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries I spent part of one day.

On these early portraits one sees more buttons on men's clothing than on the ladies'. One Pilgrim coat shows a few covered buttons the size of a pea, while another has 14 buttons of wound gold thread. I have found that gold and silver embroidery on buttons was used toward the end of the 16th century. "Up to the 18th century, in practically all European countries, men's fashions had originated with the kings and nobles. Whatever the king decided to wear, that constituted the model for all of his subjects, high and low, so far as their means permitted. No king following Charles II in England or Louis XV of France has ever been able to exercise any fashion influence over his subjects such as he or as others before him had secured. It was not until the 19th century that there again developed any spirit of such loyalty as might lead to active imitation of the sovereign."\*

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\* *Economics of Fashion* by Nystrom—The Ronald Press, New York.



Before the middle of the 19th century knee breeches had passed out and long trousers were worn by all classes and at all social functions. Dark suits, black or brown, were the rule. On portraits of the 1830's one notices poor-fitting clothes on the men, seeming as if they suffered most in the first years of the sewing machine. Their garments show the lack of skilled hand sewing. After 1870 men's apparel sank to the lowest level it has known in the history of the country, but by the end of the century, factory-made clothing equalled that of the earliest years in both style and workmanship.

On men's costumes buttons are sewed in rows down the fronts of doublets and waistcoats, also on the pockets, sleeves and breeches. They are used also on coats, trimming both front and back. A number of the men's court costumes of the French period, 1723-1774, show very elaborate buttons made entirely of needlework, over wooden button moulds.

"Towards the middle of the 18th century, buttons were made of goat's hair, silk, and later metal. Gold and silver trimmings and embroidery were now not so liberally used as they had been under Louis IV, but they appeared at the same places as in his time—at the edge of the coat in front, the slit at the back, on and all around the pocket flaps and the cuff edges."\* The ladies' dresses of these earlier periods show few buttons. There was rich ornamentation of braids, embroideries, and jewels.

However, in the exhibit of costumes I did come across some ladies' dresses with buttons on them. There was the court costume of Catherine II of Russia (1762-1796) that showed buttons sewed down the middle front numbering 21 in all, alternating two different types—the larger size covered with the same material as the dress, much braided, the other a rimless jewel button of smaller size.

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\* *History of Costume* by Karl Köhler. Published by George G. Harrop & Co., Ltd., London.



A wedding dress of 1872 had five embroidered taffeta buttons made over a mould with a star pattern done in gold thread. Another of 1872 showed a blue satin button made over a mould on which a design was worked in pale pink and ivory floss. The most popular pattern I found in several museums was the rose design (*see Plate 1, B-1*) framed in a small circle of contrasting thread. This type was usually on clothing from 1723-1796. Even saw the same buttons here in this exhibit in smaller size on men's brocaded waistcoats.

Most of the other dresses of this period had no buttons but the materials are exquisite and in a marvelous state of preservation. They are indeed well worth seeing.

There was a fine exhibit of Staffordshire enamel objets d'art, including watches, snuff boxes, program cases, etc. There was an establishment located at Bilston, in Staffordshire, which produced many celebrated enamel pieces, similar to those of its rival at Battersea. However, the Battersea plant was only in operation between 1750 and 1775.

Enamel buttons are very colorful in a collection. Enamel is the name given to vitrified substances applied chiefly to the surface of metals. The basis of all enamels is an easily fusible, colorless glass, to which the desired color and opacity are imparted by mixtures of metallic oxides. The mass, after being fused together and cooled, is reduced to a fine powder, washed and applied to the surface to be covered. The whole is then exposed in the furnace until the enamel is melted, when it adheres firmly to the metal. The art of enamelling has been practiced for many centuries in India, China and Japan, France and Germany, and Italy, England and Ireland. During the Renaissance the art revived in Italy, and in France the artists of Limoges produced many priceless works. Recent years have witnessed a great revival in Great Britain and France. Distinguished with reference to the manner of execution, enamel work may be divided into four main classes:



(1) Cloisonné or enclosed. This is the method of the Byzantine school, in which the design is formed in a kind of metal case, and the several colors are separated by very delicate filigree gold bands. Plique à jour is similar (less the metal background) the effect resembling on a small scale a stained-glass window, the lead being reproduced by the wires of plique à jour.

(2) Champlevé. In this process the ornamental design was cut in the metal, generally copper, to some depth; wherever two colors met, a thin partition of the metal was left to prevent the colors running into each other by fusion when fired.

(3) Translucent enamel or Basetaille, much used in the later medieval times, is a development of Champlevé. The subject is carved in relief below the upper surface of the metal.

(4) Surface-painted enamels may be divided into two stages. In the first, the practice was to cover the metal plate with a coating of dark enamel for shadows, and to paint on this with white. This style soon degenerated and gave place to the miniature styles, in which the plate is covered with a white opaque enamel, and the colors are laid on this with a hair pencil, and fixed on by firing. The greater part of the artistic enamel work of the present day is of Japanese fabrication and consists of Cloisonné work on a copper basis.

There are several lovely enamel buttons on *Plate 7 (Row C)* from Mrs. Buchanan's collection. The large one is very beautiful and is very heavily enamelled. The buttons on *Plates 7 (A-3)* and *Plate 11 (C-4)* appear to be Cloisonné.

Once more, I should like to remind you that the Textile Gallery, exhibiting embroideries, hand-decorated fabrics, and 18th century garments is indeed very worthwhile, as are the exhibits in the Early American Wing.

Dewy thoroughly enjoyed the exhibit of English chain-drive watches—the type he collects. Tomorrow we'll toss a coin to see whether we'll come back here or do more importers.



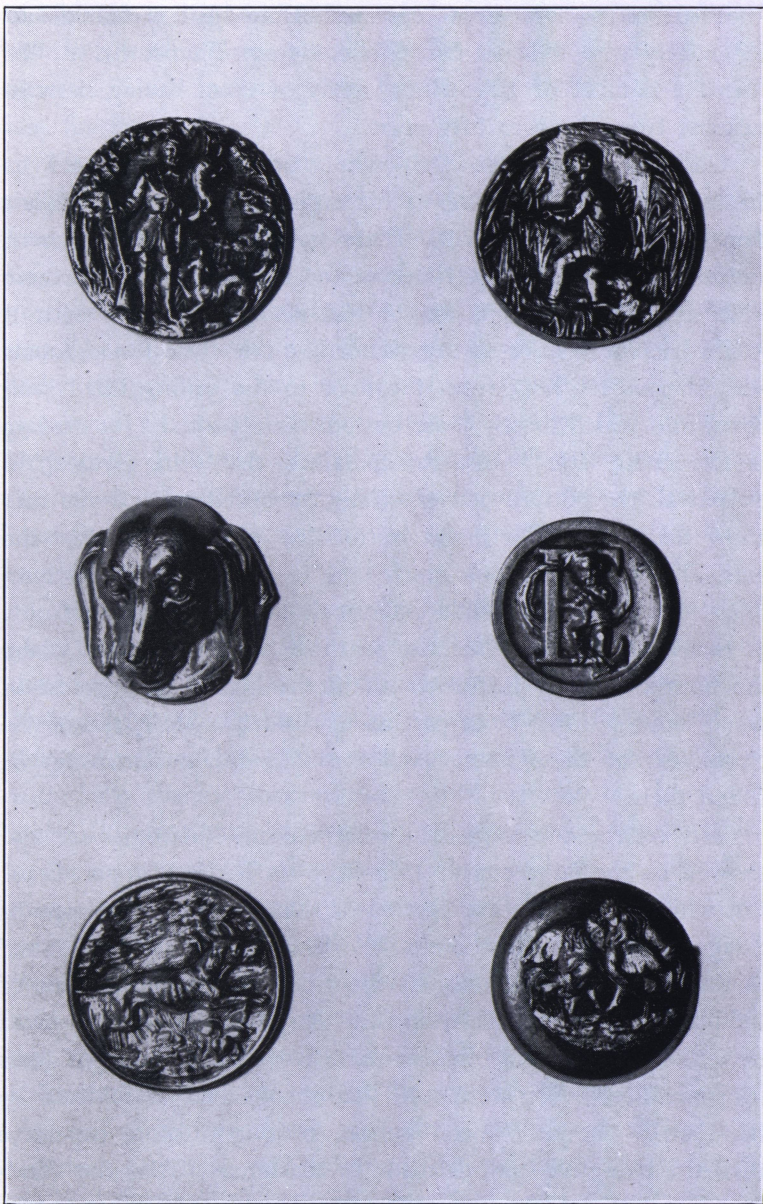


PLATE 10.

SILVER SPORTING BUTTONS

Courtesy of Mabel S. Erdman, Lebanon, Penna.  
Buttons illustrated are seven-eighths of actual size



THURSDAY — The importers won! Here again we came into an entirely new field—a bit different from Blumenthal's. We visited a number of large firms, many of them having been in business from thirty to fifty years.

One fine gentleman, the owner, personally conducted us through his shop, showing us his entire stock on three floors, then he let us roam at will. There we were among billions of buttons—all kinds—mostly the newer modern kind, but there were some older buttons too. I had always wondered what it would be like to have an experience like this. We found rooms with shelves reaching from the floor to the ceiling filled with boxes into which mostly loose buttons were packed (for carding or retouching later). Into the containers that were given to us we put all the buttons that especially interested us, and you may know that these large boxes were filled when we finished the tour. This merchant took much time to explain many processes to us. He himself travelled extensively abroad, buying not only in the world markets, but also in those parts of Europe where the button industry is carried on in the homes, the profession being handed down from parents to children. He spoke of the cleanliness of these homes and the splendid workmanship he found there.

His college son explained what button "findings" are and showed us the large supply they keep on hand. Copper, brass, tin, white metal, etc., are pressed or stamped into every type of design or pattern. These are called "findings" and are unfinished in this state although many of them become the top or face of the buttons we wear. Thousands of designs are made and stored in sectional boxes and oftentimes these last over a period of years or generations. We were told that shanks can be soldered by hand on a one-piece metal button, making it more expensive than the two-piece buttons made by machinery. Also the "finding" can be used as an escutcheon on any type button. A wire



is soldered to it and oftentimes a hole is drilled into the button base; the wire is then drawn through it and turned into a shank beneath. These buttons, when finished, are electroplated in various finishes.

Here we found some old-time faceted "jet" buttons. A number of years ago they were painted with iridescent lustre, fired, and still they remained on the shelves...some time ago they were lacquered in gold and plain dark colors. These are nearly all the largest size buttons, used mostly on coats. I found that by soaking them in a cleaning solution the added paint is easily removed and the lustre surface is unharmed. We also uncovered an unusual button. It was a large size, seemingly lacquered a dull blue color. Upon examination the back showed the button to be of colored glass. Again, upon soaking the button in a cleaning solution, a beautiful, transparent, blue-glass button emerges! (*see Plate 3*).

Among the older buttons we found some lovely opalescent glass buttons on cards that were so brittle that handling broke them into tiny bits. On a card containing twelve buttons no two designs were exactly uniform, showing definite hand work. In this same class belong the small opaque colored glass buttons with long shanks; they resemble shoe buttons but have such lovely little patterns, in contrasting colors, added when molded.

In these manufacturing plants, where millions of buttons are made and stored, it is easy to understand how changes of style seriously effect their stock. In many cases the owners found themselves with quantities of old buttons on hand; some of them sold everything by the pound to dispose of it a decade or more ago, while others allowed the old stock to remain on the shelves to be transformed later to meet the demands of the ever changing fashion. Somewhere I've read that "nothing is thought rare which is not new, and followed; yet we know that what was worn some twenty years ago comes into grace again."



We collectors, also, do a bit of reconditioning. I polish metal buttons and lacquer them since that retains the high polish and keeps them from tarnishing afterward. (Clear nail polish serves the purpose well). Also, I know a number of collectors who lacquer buffalo horn, horn inlays, plastic horn, and early composition buttons, for it not only preserves them but it also makes them more attractive.

It behooves all of us to look to our eyes. . . have them examined and reconditioned, . . . so that we can detect these old buttons that have in some cases been covered up with coats of paint. I'm sure more than one surprise will await you as it has me! I have been asked many times whether a certain button is new; take, for example, the paperweight button. In my visits to the manufacturers and importers, I never came across a single one. I showed them some of my specimens and they mentioned having had similar buttons since 1900; but, nowhere did I find any in stock. I know that there are newer paperweight buttons and that many of them are very beautiful. The same process was used on these as on the older ones, and I feel definitely that I want these buttons whether old or new, for there surely is exquisite beauty in a collection of this type, even though some collectors feel that they do have a harder, colder appearance than the older ones. It might be altogether possible that the older new paperweight buttons are as old as the newer old paperweight buttons! After all, we know that the older P.W.'s come after 1850. . . Was the art discontinued? . . . If so, when was it revived?

I've been told by some manufacturers that we, collectors, are an annoyance, a hindrance as it were, to these large concerns by interrupting busy routine, and taking much of their precious time while we hunt through the old stock. However, if you make friends with them, as we have done, you will find their friendships true and abiding; and, I know that we feel a close kinship existing, even though generations lie between the old and the newer buttons of today.



I prefer (whenever possible to do so) to buy buttons at old stores for the following reasons:

- (1) The most reliable and accurate information can be obtained from original cards and boxes.
- (2) The buttons are unused and therefore finer specimens.
- (3) Ofttimes they can be purchased at original prices or at a price agreed upon by both parties.

In this way sentiment is entirely out of the picture. I know of an actual case where one person trading a silver lustre face "jet" button (conventional design, selling originally for 24 to 36 cents a dozen) said, "My great grandmother paid \$2 each for these buttons. What have you to trade?" Now, I ask you ... what have you to trade in such a situation?

Before leaving this importer's place of business, I want to mention again the courtesy shown to us. (We have been back a number of times and each time have had much help from him.) We shall always appreciate being on the inside and having a view of the business from his angle.

The visits to the seamstresses and costume establishments netted both information and buttons. In one shop we found buttons dating back over seventy-five years and bought the entire stock. There were tiny paperweight buttons with Christmas tree designs in green with goldstone trimmings. They are very beautiful little buttons. There were marvelous cut steel buttons as large as silver dollars, very interesting and intricate in detail, for these tiny bits of steel were all hand-riveted to a metal disc. The original price on these large buttons, worn around 1850, was \$8.50 a dozen. It is difficult to pull ourselves away from these old shops. Somehow or other, by nightfall, we are tired out. Maybe this is hard work that we are doing, after all!



Courtesy of Dorothy Lloyd, Hamburg, Penna.

Row	No.	Classification and Description
A	1	Milk glass center with brass head escutcheon and brass collet.
	2	Hand-painted china (possibly taken from Greuze, a French painter, 1726-1805, a colorist, who depicted scenes of the middle class).
	3	Chrome lithograph under celluloid—filigree setting after 1870.
	4	Chrome lithograph under domed glass with brilliants in setting.
B		Sporting buttons—brass escutcheon animals on mother-of-pearl—very fine.
C	1	Cameo grey glass—brass collet—very fine.
	2	Black glass—white porcelain medallion head.
	3	Coin reproduction—set in brilliants.
	4	Cloisonné type.

FRIDAY—Spent the best part of the day reading in the library here. This is another place one could stay indefinitely. Have made many notes on costumes of these earlier periods.

"When fashions originated with kings and queens, as it seems possible that they once did, it was easy to state that certain fashions began and ended with a monarch's reign. Assuming for the time being the correctness of this view of relating fashions to periods of reign of kings and queens in past history, it is clearly different now. Probably no reigning monarch in modern times has had the power either of starting or stopping fashion movements. Nor is it easy to find any method by which fashion dates may be definitely set. One must look to the social and economic history of a people to find the origin of fashion movements. In social life, in the manner of living, each period almost imperceptibly dissolves and forms a part of the next. Boundary lines are hardly ever clear.

"Fashions prior to the French Revolution, both in France and in other western countries, had developed and expressed in a multitude of ways the ripened styles of the period of the later



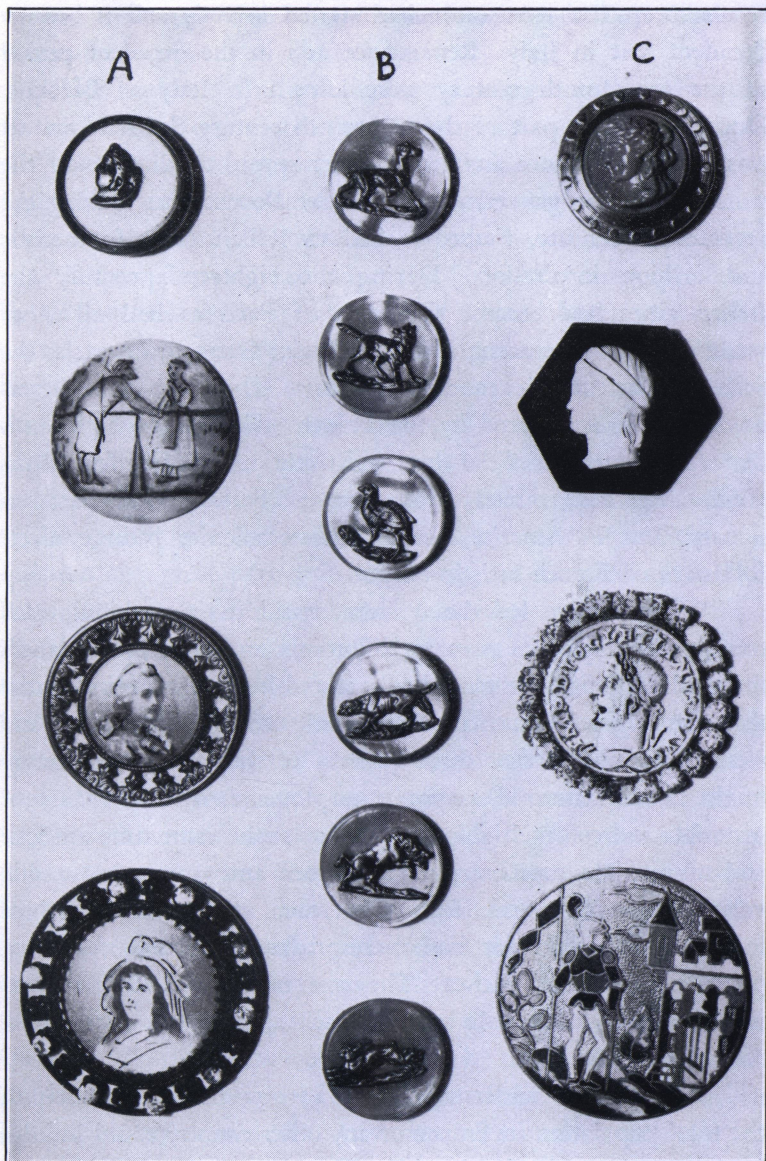


PLATE 11.

Buttons illustrated are seven-eighths of actual size



renaissance. The renaissance had started in Italy and it became decadent first in Italy. Renaissance arts in the decadent period of the seventeenth century were known in Italy as Baroque. During the early part of the eighteenth century the Baroque art was carried to France and from thence spread to all parts of the world under the general designation of Rococo art. During the seventeenth century, France looked to Italian cities for artistic and fashion inspiration. During the eighteenth century the Italian cities had become followers of Paris as had all other western nations including England, Spain, Germany, Austria, the Scandinavian countries, and even Russia. The colonies in America were also influenced by the French styles of the eighteenth century, but prior to 1776 drew indirectly on England for inspiration rather than directly from France. Following the Revolutionary War in America, the American colonies became direct followers of French artistic fashion.

"While France led the western world in its fashions, each country developed its own modifications and in some instances the modifications were more brilliant and became more influential than the original French models. The clothing of both men and women during the first three-quarters of the eighteenth century might be characterized as gorgeous plumage, rich in its use of materials and colors, highly artistic, but at the same time artificial and unsuited to practical use. Both men and women wore silk, velvet, embroidery and laces. Both men and women indulged in apparel of vivid color, both were profuse in the use of jewelry, paint, powder, and sachet. The cost of apparel, as one may judge from the materials out of which apparel was constructed, ran very high.

"It is easy to understand what a very small proportion of the total population in France or any other country could indulge in their desire to be fashionable. The masses of common people of the working classes had no part in these fashions. Their



apparel was generally of the simplest and coarsest kind of materials.

"The leaders of fashion during the eighteenth century prior to the French Revolution were the kings of the court of France and their queens or mistresses. The brilliance of the court of Louis XIV and its achievements attracted the attention, admiration, and imitation of the western world.

"The emphasis on fashion at the Court of France, promoted by the personal whims and tastes of Queen Marie Antoinette, caused an extraordinary boom in the dressmaking and millinery business. In France, as in other European countries, most industries had been organized and developed under what was known as the guild system. There were old, well-established guilds of textile spinners and weavers, guilds of jewelers, guilds of silver-smiths, guilds of cabinet makers, and so on..."\* Without a question the great period in the history of costume as well as button design was the eighteenth century.

"Marie Antoinette, Queen of France, wife of Louis XIV, came from the court of Austria as a young, lively, fun-loving girl. Her education had been neglected, and she was decidedly ignorant on most subjects; and it was not certain she could even read or write when she became Queen of France. She loved to sing and dance and was fond of the theatre. She was ambitious to become an actress. She chose to spend most of her time in Versailles rather than Paris, organized her community of make believe peasants who acted and dressed the part of milk maids and shepherdesses. Every new activity of the Queen brought with it new opportunities for dressing up and the whims of the Queen in these respects were followed by the ladies of the court and by the outside world as the fashion of the hour. The French Revolution began in 1789. It would be a mistake, however, to

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\* *Economics of Fashion* by Paul H. Nystrom. Published by The Ronald Press.



think that the styles generally termed Louis XVI styles from the king of France ruling at the time of the French Revolution, ceased to exist when he was deposed and that new styles came immediately into fashion. Louis XVI styles had, in fact, already begun to decline several years before the political revolution took place, and did not pass out entirely for probably from ten to twenty years after the time of the revolution. Moreover, Louis XVI styles were not confined exclusively to France. So, while the French Revolution sharply marked a turning point in the political history of France, it made a smaller immediate difference in the social life and fashion in Europe as a whole than is commonly supposed.

"During the Revolution the French fashion industries went to pieces. People who had looked to France for artistic goods, transferred their search for those articles to other countries, particularly England. English fashions dominated in most European countries from 1793 to 1796, when the fashionable people of France began to imitate the classic models of Greece and Rome. From this combination came the so-called Empire style which continued through Napoleon's reign, and the restoration under Louis XVIII, passing out between 1825 and 1830. During this period, fashion exaggerated and emphasized women's breasts. From 1825 to 1845 it was the sleeve. From 1845 to 1870, the skirt came in again for outstanding exaggeration. During the 70's and 80's, the bustle and bustle affects were added. In the 90's the leg-o'-mutton sleeve prevailed to the end of the century.

"The women of Napoleon's court, even Empress Josephine and her successor, Marie Louise, had practically no effect on the trends of fashion whatever. Both of them followed the current fashions rather than attempting to set them.

"It was during the period 1825-1845 that bad health came into fashion, particularly for women. Following the corsetless period of the French Revolution and the Empire period, the use



of corsets again set in. By 1830, tight lacing had been carried to such exaggerated limits that this may have been one of the reasons for the commonness of paleness and fainting spells among women of that time. During the 20's women began to add more fabric to their dresses; then, later, in the 30's, more garments, particularly more petticoats, so that by the latter 50's there were women who wore as many as thirty thicknesses of cloth about their waists. Also in the latter 50's a new invention, the crinoline, came into use."\*

More of this later. . . Dewy tells me it is time for our next appointment.

Later—I had to stop rather abruptly late this afternoon. Time passes so rapidly here that we were almost late as it was.

I mentioned previously my habit of carrying a small string of buttons in my purse, and here in New York I've had lots of fun with it. In some of the newer button establishments many of these buttons are unknown. In the older houses where there no longer are old buttons in stock, those in charge are eager to examine mine. In one place I had quite a group of button salesmen each waiting their turn to look them over.

We packed up everything tonight to go back home. These have been wonderful days, but if we want to spend some time in the Pennsylvania Dutch country next week, we must get everything straightened out at home during these next few days.

SATURDAY—Today was crowded so full of the regular household duties that there was little time left for buttons. I was too busy to classify those that had arrived while we were in New York. I had several surprises. . . one, the button string I was expecting arrived. It was a small string but there were a number

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\* *Economics of Fashion* by Paul H. Nystrom. Published by the Ronald Press.



of fine old metal buttons, several shell cameos (ofttimes various mollusks are used in making these cameos), waistcoat and sporting buttons, and the general types one finds on these strings. I'm keeping all of the old strings I get now, intact until after the exhibit in January.

At last the unexpected has happened! *A real jet button* has arrived! Now I need no longer test black glass, lacquered wood and hard rubber suspects for jet. Although I have had a piece of an old jet bracelet for comparison, still, a button is a button, and this one is real. And the best part of it is that there are more where this one came from. It is surprising how brittle they are; we burned part of a broken one and there was no mistake about it being jet, since Dewy is a chemist and his word is all I need. Now...I wonder how many of you collectors have found real jet buttons. Mrs. Crummet writes me she sent to England for the ones she has. Mine also have come from an older English lady.

Dewy spent part of the day in his vegetable garden. Tonight he is putting his new purchases in their proper places. There are several revolvers and guns, some coins for the commemorative half-dollar collection, and a number of silver souvenir spoons.

#### PLATE 12.

Row	No.	Classification and Description
A		Glass paperweights—Millville, N. J.—beautiful rose pattern, $\frac{3}{8}$ ". Milk glass bottom, small shank plate, wire shank. Courtesy Mabel S. Erdman, Lebanon, Penna.
B	1	Glass—paint filled in depression, backed, metal collet.
	2	Glass—peacock eye—lovely blue green—from "The Patchwork House," Hightstown, N. J.
	3	Glass—molded garnet cluster, small metal shank plate and shank. Very fine.
	4	Open work setting—fine gold plated, for eleven brilliants.
	5	Enamel center—brass plate covered with opaque enamel, color laid on with hair pencil and fixed by firing. Lovely. Courtesy



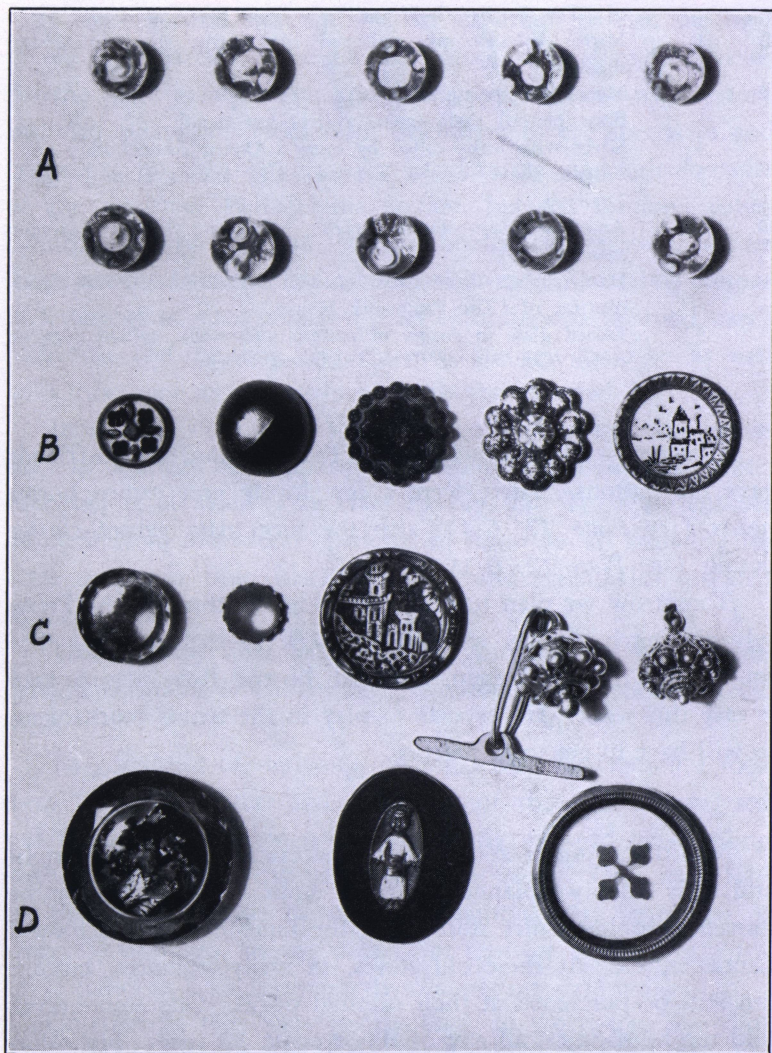


PLATE 12.

Buttons illustrated are seven-eighths of actual size



- of "The Patchwork House."
- C    1    Mirror kaleidoscope—scalloped edge, large shank plate and shank.  
       2    Moonstone—prong setting.  
       3    Bone pierced shell—metal collet—fine detail.  
       4    Silver with link—called by some a Queen Anne button.  
       5    Filigree silver—one of five owned by author, from Bangkok, Thailand.
- D    1    Amethyst glass—faceted collet, goldstone insert, European shank.  
       2    Hard rubber—hand-made, enamel escutcheon, oriental figure, courtesy of "The Patchwork House."  
       3    Etched glass in design of pattern underneath, milled edge on collet. Courtesy of "The Patchwork House."

SUNDAY — After church services this morning, several friends gave me buttons. There were a few lovely grey cameo horses heads (*see Plate 17, C-4*), also the nice glass garnet cluster button (*see Plate 12, B-3*).

Tomorrow we plan to start out on a trip through the Pennsylvania-Dutch country to spend a week in that locality. The son's school vacation began, and both he and Patty plan to take it easy this week! He expects to play in the tennis tournament, so will have to get some practice.

MONDAY, August 26th— It was necessary to get away bright and early since we planned so many stops. I don't believe we missed a single country store along the Lincoln Highway toward Lancaster, Pa. At these old stores, in many instances, buttons can still be purchased at their original prices. One store-keeper told me he hadn't sold any of this type in 39 years. My color-banded collection was greatly benefitted here. I bought many dozen lovely solid color turquoise blue china buttons (*Plate 2, B-2*) made in France before the turn of the century. They sold for five cents a dozen. I had the same type button in other shades, but had never seen the turquoise shade.



"These general stores played an important part in the lives of our grandparents, serving as post office, drug store, and haven for the latest gossip. You know the type I mean—whose stock included everything from farm machinery to eye spectacles and buttons. Not perhaps the choicer paperweights and kaleidoscopes of the wealthier Philadelphia section, but the common color-banded and calico buttons. When I finally left the store, besides the above-mentioned, I had a hundred or more fine calico buttons in a number of sizes plus two pairs of old spectacles for Dewy's collection, and the shop keeper assured me you could see as well with them now as you could when they were new!"\*

In an old store near Valley Forge I purchased the entire stock of Spatterware buttons (Pattern No. 193 according to Mr. Morgan) in all sizes. (*see Plate 13, No. 4*). These are entirely different from the "decal" patterns in calico we all know. They came in brown, blue, black, lavender, and green, also speckled in many colors.

These quaint little calico buttons intrigue me very much; being a decorator of chinaware it is natural that I should prefer them.

To get ahead of my story, on my return to Trenton I took them to manufacturers and decorators of china to be analyzed and found that the design was apparently sponged by stippling method and fired at the temperature for china. One artist told me that he had made thousands of buttons fifty years ago in Dresden, Germany, using "decals" or transfer patterns of vitrifiable colors as I teach my pupils to apply on ware today.

Occasionally they were poorly fired, so the design wore off more quickly. Apparently in this lot that I mentioned purchasing above, there were two kinds: a fine quality of white opaque china made in France, well-fired, selling for five cents a dozen; and a more translucent button, larger in size, of poorer quality,

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\* *Button-holing the Countryside* by the author. January *Hobbies*, 1941.



made in Germany, for three cents a dozen. It is almost as if they had seconds in those days, too!

In the locality where I live large inch-size calico buttons must have been prevalent, for in my collection I have several dozen. They are much sought after and admired. They are indeed beautiful. (*see Plate 13*).

To go back to the Lincoln Highway: on coming into Lancaster County, I came across many "jet" buttons, both plain and surfaced with gold, silver, and iridescent lustres. I found there were fewer gilt than the other type, possibly indicating gold to be the scarcer, yet at that, I found simple, lovely gold floral designs at fifteen cents a dozen. In a few instances I found hand-painted designs in the old cornucopia and paisley patterns; these specimen buttons upon closer inspection show shadings in color clearly. (*see Plate 6, B-1, D-1*). Again there were two kinds, those that were fired in a kiln and the decoration had become a part of the glaze, and those done in oil colors. Much use shows that these last-mentioned wear off in time.

There were nearly always buffalo horn inlays in many colors to be had in these country stores.

As it was getting on toward night, we decided to stay in this locality and glean what we could from the contacts we made at night.

# PLATE 13.

## LARGE CALICO BUTTONS

No.	Classification	Pattern	
		No.*	Size
1	Blue and white		$\frac{7}{8}$ "
2	Cerise with garnet		$\frac{7}{8}$ "
3	Lavender and white		$\frac{7}{8}$ "
4	Blue and white—Spatterware	193	1"
5	Brown and white	96	over 1"
6	Blue and white—completely covered with vines.		over 1"
7	Black and white	17	over 1"



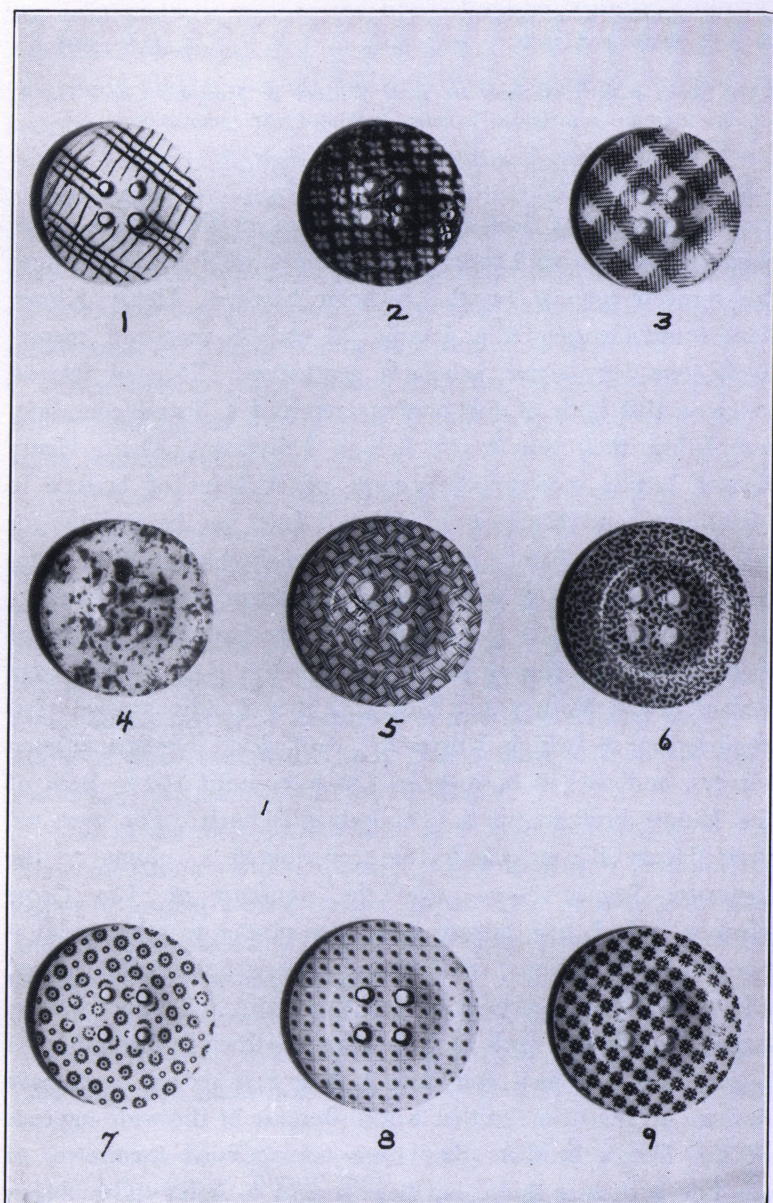


PLATE 13.

Buttons illustrated are seven-eighths of actual size



8	Lavender and white	107	over 1"
9	Black and white	113	over 1"

\* The above pattern numbers are from Wilfred B. Morgan's *Check List of Calico Buttons*, copyrighted by him—reprinted with permission.

TUESDAY — At Lancaster we headed northeast and drove about four miles to Landis Valley where we intended visiting the museum owned by the bachelor brothers, Henry Kinzer Landis and George Diller Landis, 75 and 73 years old, respectively, two very active, scholarly gentlemen. "It is of interest to know that both of the brothers received a liberal education, completing their studies in Lehigh University, where Henry Kinzer Landis received the degree of Bachelor of Science in Metallurgy, and Engineer of Mines. Later on he worked for the Pennsylvania Steel Company and the Bethlehem Iron Company. For a time he was a college professor at the University of Missouri, and for a period of thirty years was editor of *Engineering and Mining Journal*, *Progressive Age*, and *Gas Age Record*, New York City. George Diller Landis studied civil engineering at Lehigh University, worked on western railroad surveys, and was in business in Lancaster until 1924. Both of the Landis brothers speak 'Pennsylvania-Dutch.' For over ten years Henry Kinzer Landis has contributed a column to the Lancaster *Sunday News*, over the signature of 'Der Grose Henner.' He is also an occasional contributor to other publications, such as *Antique*, folklore and historical society magazines, and to the Sunday editions of the *New York Sun*. The brothers began the serious work of collecting worthwhile material over twenty-five years ago, and during these last sixteen years have devoted all their time to that work. Because of the wide interests of the Landis brothers they have not confined themselves to any one particular thing, but have sought to select those objects



that would clearly picture the life, education, culture, customs, industries, products, etc., of the early 'Dutch' inhabitants."\*

One finds articles varying in size from Conestoga wagons to buttons.

"As a result, the Landis Valley Museum represents, without a doubt, the most varied and unique collection of Pennsylvania-German folk art and hand craft that is in existence. Others who have specialized in particular fields perhaps have finer collections of extremely rare pieces of pottery, glass, etc., but for comprehensiveness the Landis Valley Museum is unsurpassed."\*

These brothers were very cordial, Mr. Henry Landis personally conducting us through the buildings. It was here that I really found BUTTONS.

"I know it is the dream of every collector to find at least one paperweight button, come upon it sort of unawares!—but to spend hours with paperweights, kaleidoscopes, swirl-back, and other choice glass buttons...letting your fingers become accustomed to the feel of them...feasting your eyes upon the beauty and intricacy of design and color...is an opportunity of a lifetime. That's just what happened to me. There I had an opportunity to study buttons of every classification, design, and type, and truly I say there is ART in buttons."†

One of the most outstanding paperweight buttons was a porcelain medallion (which appeared to be Benjamin Franklin) in amber or raspberry glass convex shape. Some of the earlier glass and semi-precious stone buttons had staple shanks and definitely belong to the clay-bed process.

You couldn't name a material or type that wasn't represented. There were white and yellow metal buttons, plain, pressed and engraved; also laminated "jewels" in glass, and whole exhibits

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\* Article, *The Landis Valley Museum—Another Step Forward* from *The American-German Review*, August, 1940.

† *Buttonholing the Countryside* by the author—*Hobbies*, January, 1941.



of the process of lamination, or the building up of these glass buttons. (see Plate 17, A-3, B-3). There were old pewter buttons with wire loops, not the lead type most commonly called pewter today. I find a good test for pewter and lead to be the following: pewter is an alloy of four parts of tin to one part of lead. This addition of tin makes the pewter harder and causes it to retain a high polish, while lead, on the other hand, is quite soft, tarnishes readily, and makes a black mark on paper. Later on buttons made of britannia metal appeared on the market. This is an alloy of copper and antimony in addition to tin. The metal is considerably harder, whiter, and more brittle. I have found that many of these little escutcheons on metal buttons were made from britannia metal, which retains its shape and brilliance through the years.

"Here, also, I came across an odd looking object, originally an earthenware jug, possibly twenty-five or thirty years old, covered with a putty-like substance into which all sorts of objects were stuck—marbles, charms, brooches, badges and buttons. The putty was later gilded and the finished product then graced the parlor table. It seems as if this was a fad in certain parts of the country. Recently I have come across several of these jugs or tall pitchers. Some time ago I spent an evening with a friend who showed me a similar jug. She, however, has become button conscious and pried loose all the buttons which were part of a button string of many years ago. After soaking them in a cleaning solution she added them to her mounted collection."\*

Mr. Landis showed me a strip of dark material, possibly 8 x 12 inches in size, on which many lovely old buttons had been sewed in a designated pattern. Not all of them were different. As I recall them, the three buttons on each corner were arranged in a triangle and were alike. This strip at one time was

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\* *Buttonholing the Countryside* by the author—*Hobbies*, January, 1941.



highly thought of and had a place of honor on the parlor wall.

We decided we could not see everything in one day, so since this first day have returned a number of times.

While I am still on the subject of the Museum, on another day Mr. Henry Landis told me about an itinerant peddler who dropped in to see whether the owners wished to buy any old buttons. Upon inquiry, it seems as though there was a bushel bag of buttons to be disposed of! They got into just the right place when they finally landed in that museum! That genial gentleman thereupon poured a peck of them into a large dishpan and he, Dewy and I went to it. . . I tell you, we had dishpan hands when we finished! And such buttons! I never hope to see the like again outside of Landis Valley Museum.

The most of the buttons at the Landis Valley Museum are awaiting permanent classification, and while a collection is in this condition, it is difficult to display them satisfactorily. However, the Landis brothers were most generous in allowing me to examine them individually. This too, I know, was a privilege of a lifetime. Reluctantly we left this museum, a veritable treasure house, and its curators, promising ourselves to return.

#### PLATE 14.

A number of parlor ornaments that have been made from buttons have been found. The following are a few that have come to my notice.

**MATCH HOLDERS—STAR-SHAPED** (*see Plate 14*). A set design was used on star points with shoe buttons completely outlining the form and pocket. Originally from Heath, Mass. Courtesy of "Patchwork House," Hightstown, New Jersey.

**COMB AND BRUSH HOLDERS**—Made in like manner.

**JUGS, PITCHERS, AND BUTTON BOXES**—which have been covered with a putty-like substance into which buttons have been stuck and later gilded.

**MONOGRAM MADE OF BLACK BUTTONS**—completely filled in with border of common white china buttons—framed.

**PANELS OF DARK CLOTH**—in all sizes—on which unusually colorful glass buttons have been sewed in a designated pattern or motif.



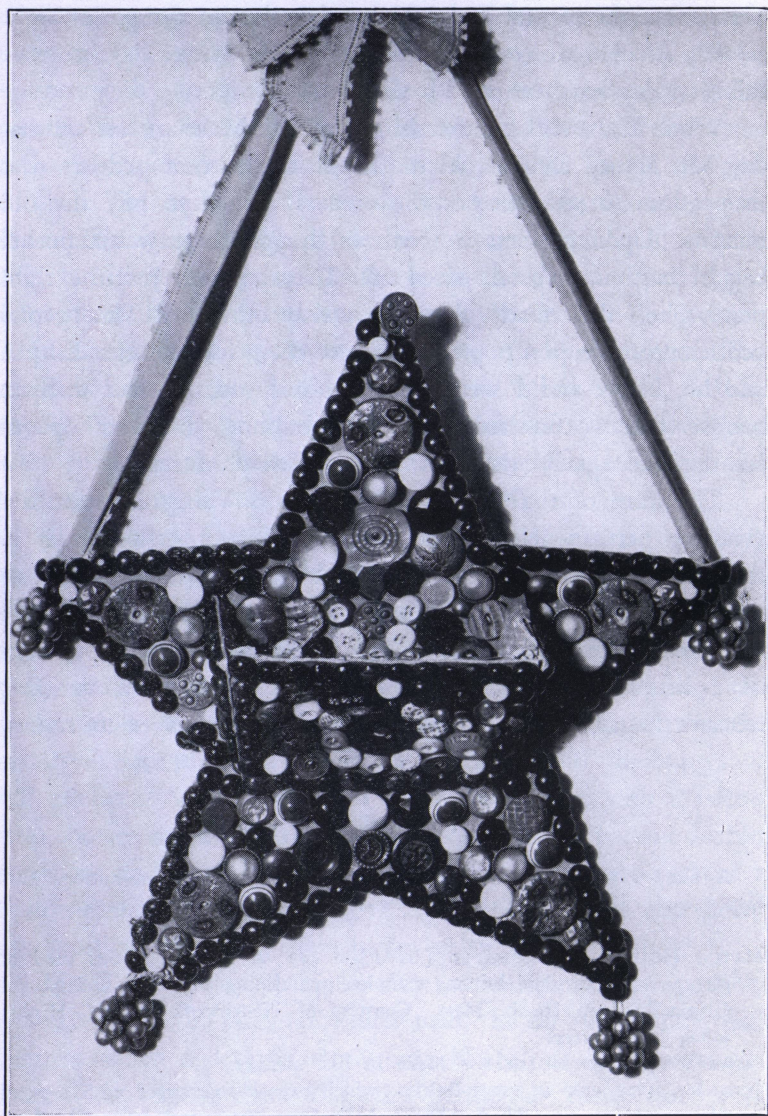


PLATE 14.



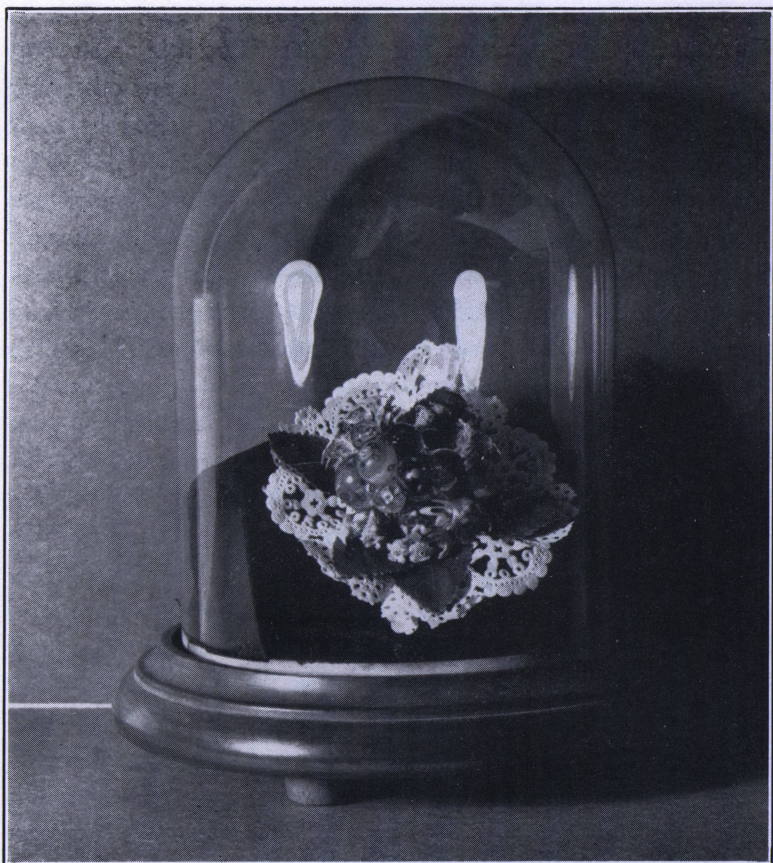


PLATE 14a.

BOUQUET OF PAPERWEIGHT BUTTONS (*see Plate 14a*). This reproduction was made by Sarah Buchanan, Hightstown, New Jersey.

TREES — Shoe buttons strung tightly on a wire for shape and all types of buttons hung from the branches—placed under a glass dome.

WREATHS — Made entirely from buttons and mounted in the old-fashioned shadow boxes (similar to hair wreaths).

HOUSES OR CASTLES — A form is made and covered with buttons which have been sewed to the outside walls—sometimes placed under glass dome.

Lately, *Hobbies* has carried items about various articles that are being made from buttons today, such as dolls, pictures, screens, etc.



WEDNESDAY — Today we move on toward Lebanon County. This certainly is picturesque country. There is probably a stronger local pride in Pennsylvania than is to be found in any other part of America, and the feeling of permanence conveyed by these Pennsylvania homesteads is most satisfying.

We passed through the little town of Ephrata which has attracted a great deal of attention, perhaps owing to its unusualness. There we found the Ephrata Cloisters. The religious institution of Ephrata was founded about 1730, and the simple faith and pure life of these people is a pleasant memory. This little village is a pilgrimage point for tourists, and here we found a number of antique shops where I got some very fine buttons.

While Mennonites and Plain People never wore buttons on their clothing, it is interesting to note that some of the old button strings do come from these families. Mr. Landis of the Landis Valley Museum also found this to be true. Around Lancaster I have seen and spoken with many Amish people. I have heard them referred to as "Hook and Eye" Mennonites here in Pennsylvania. One lady told me that the reason they do not wear buttons is because Jacob Amen, the founder of their faith in Switzerland, was opposed to the killing of animals, and during the seventeenth century there, most of the common buttons were made from bone; therefore, the wearing of buttons was not allowed among his followers.

At one antique shop I found brass railroad official buttons from a railroad no longer in existence. It operated between Hightstown and Pemberton years ago. How railroad buttons do travel even when not on the trains!

There were quite a few lovely old colored and clear glass buttons. I like these old glass buttons. Some of these were made in a cavity mold, shaping the back only, and had color diffused around the shank. Some were the reflector type, and others were the glories (paperweight type-reflectors). (*see Plate 15, B-2*).



I bought others also, many of them petal-shaped. (*see Plate 15, B-5, C-1*). These old glass buttons are very fragile so that the death rate is quite high, and that accounts for their not being so plentiful. The shanks that were put in these buttons were easily twisted or broken out. Years later a shank plate was added, which made them last longer. Where buttons in general seem to be overpriced, this particular variety, to my way of thinking, seems to be underpriced.

I sent out a questionnaire to a number of my collector friends, and in every case it was the same story—"not at all easy to find." Others say they find only about one of these old glass buttons to every one hundred of heads, birds, scenes, etc. Am wondering how the rest of you rate these buttons.

Continuing our drive to Lebanon, Pennsylvania, where my sister, Mabel Erdman, resides. She had already lined up a number of side trips for buttons, together with a call to be made on Dorothy Lloyd in Hamburg. Dorothy has a very fine collection (about 55,000 buttons), having started over a year ago. She is a very orderly collector and her specimen cards were beautifully designed and arranged. Should any of you be near her locality, I'm sure you would find her as we did, very gracious and obliging in showing her buttons. Both she and her husband get much enjoyment out of this hobby.

After a delightful dinner here among the hills, we began to look for antique shops and country stores. We found that buffalo horn was plentiful in this locality, and in the stores original cards could still be purchased at a very low price; it seems to me that it was five cents for two dozen. (The cards were originally marked fifteen or twenty cents per dozen.)

This entire drive back was less marked by open plains than we found to be the rule in Lancaster County. The gentle hills and the numerous turns give the country an older, cozier and more pleasing effect pictorially. In one shop we found some



beautiful large glass buttons, convex in shape, one-half inch thick, amber in color, with a large center insert similar to the type from Nova Scotia described before. The collet of the button is faceted in diamond pattern. It has a metal European shank. I was told at one importer's place that this button sold forty years ago for \$12.00 a gross. Here they asked \$3.50 apiece! My sister had gotten a number of hawthorne colored ones in a larger size a short time before this. It seems, as in glass collecting, this shade in lavender is more desirable. I am proud to own one of these buttons. (*see Plate 12, D-1*). Also bought a lovely deep blue glass button faced in silver lustre, like the kind I saw in the Landis Valley Museum. Usually these silver-faced buttons were on black glass, but I was told by an importer that any color glass was used in this process of facing with silver lustre. (*see Plate 6, E-3*). However, the type we generally find silvered are black glass (jet). I have a number in blue, and they are very beautiful. This one pictured has a shank fastened in the glass without a shank plate. The others in my collection have wedge shaped shanks in the solid body, holes drilled and designs on face. The earliest ones have ground edges while the later ones of this type are not as thick and have rough edges.

I also have several other very large glass ones, faced with gold lustre and appearing black except when held to the light; they then look wine colored.

While thinking about the unusual buttons, I might add that upon examining thousands of black glass buttons in many places, I have never found a *real* jet button. The real jet buttons in my collection came as a gift from an elderly lady who had purchased them from a craftsman making real jet accessories about 1865. Jet is very light in weight in comparison with black glass, and soft also, so that it can be carved with a knife. It is brittle, however, and easily broken. Maybe that is the reason we find so few of them. It has been said that about ninety-nine percent



of the buttons commonly called "jets" are in reality black glass. I have found even that percentage too low in my collecting.

At this same shop I got a beautiful little cone-shaped paper-weight button with the base of solid white color with a wire shank. Looking into the cone one sees pale blue color with flecks of goldstone (*see Plate 17, E-3*). Also got a few gay plaids in kaleidoscopes, and again more buffalo horn. While our frontiers were being pushed westward, the buffalo was indeed a very necessary animal. The meat of the animal was a staple food, and many uses were found for the hides. Later it was found that the horns of the animals could also be used in the making of buttons. Many of these had been bleached from lying there in the sun so long, for buffalo horn is dark in color. After the horn was cooked it was dyed; in some cases the buttons made from it are translucent, while others are brilliant in color. These I got today are brighter in color than any I had. In this lot, stamped Buffalo Horn on the cards, are bright red, rose and blue. They originally sold for twenty cents a dozen for buttons the size of a dime (*see Plate 16, A*).

My sister was very fortunate in getting thirteen matching kaleidoscopes, in bright red, blue and green plaid, with faceted tops. (*see Plate 17, D-4*). Tonight in her home we took stock of today's find and are richer by several thousand buttons typical of this locality. And Dewy also added a number of items to his varied collections: several copies Volume 1, No. 1, his newest hobby, an old spoon mold, two old fountain pens, a pewter plate and some radio equipment for his amateur broadcasting set. When he has a little time to himself he is working on a new short wave transmitter.\*

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\* He has owned and operated amateur short wave station W3ABF since 1923.



## PLATE 15.

Row	No.	Classification and Description
A	1	Glass—Shank placed in offhand manner.
	2	Glass—swirl back (shank was rotated while material cooled) enclosing mold shaping both front and back.
	3	Glass—front mold, swirl back.
	4	Glass—swirl back, separate ornament added to face after removal from mold.
	5	Glass—swirl back, after removal from mold tip dipped in white glass.
B	1	Glass—solid color, cavity mold shaping back only.
	2	Glass—reflector type (Mr. Johnson calls these <i>Glories.</i> ), contrasting color diffused around shank.
	3	Glass—solid color with tear on face.
	4	Glass—clear, having tear on face and contrasting color on back.
	5	Glass—clear, enclosing molds.
C	1	Glass—clear, enclosing mold with color diffused around shank.
	2	Glass—clear, enclosing mold, depression on back filled with color.
	3	Glass—clambroth, enclosing mold, depressions on face filled with color.
	4	Glass—opal, offhand type shank.
	5	Glass—clear, backed with lead foil, petal-shaped.
D	1	Glass—clear, enclosing molds, spiral-faced, depression on back filled with paint; American make, marked "Boston Four Dames," 72 buttons to card. Sent by Dorothy Lloyd, Hamburg, Pennsylvania.
	2	Glass—clear, shell, front mold.
	3	Glass—clear, shank set deep into the glass.
	4	Milk glass—embedded shank and loop.
	5	Milk glass—long shank, peculiar indented shank plate.
E	1	Glass—solid color, beveled sides, gold mounting pin through button forming shank beneath.
	2	Glass—opaque, molded definitely for gold mounting.
	3	Glass—raspberry colored P. W., with milk glass bottom, wire loop.
	4	Glass—clambroth, front mold, tip colored in mold, swirl back.
	5	Glass—mirror-faceted, star shape, backed.
F	1	Glass top—design painted underneath, backed with pitch or tar; very delicate construction.
	2	Metal—china center, design fired.
	3	Metal—enamel center, design fired.
	4	Metal—raspberry glass center.
	5	Glass—marbled with flecks of goldstone, shankplate and shank.



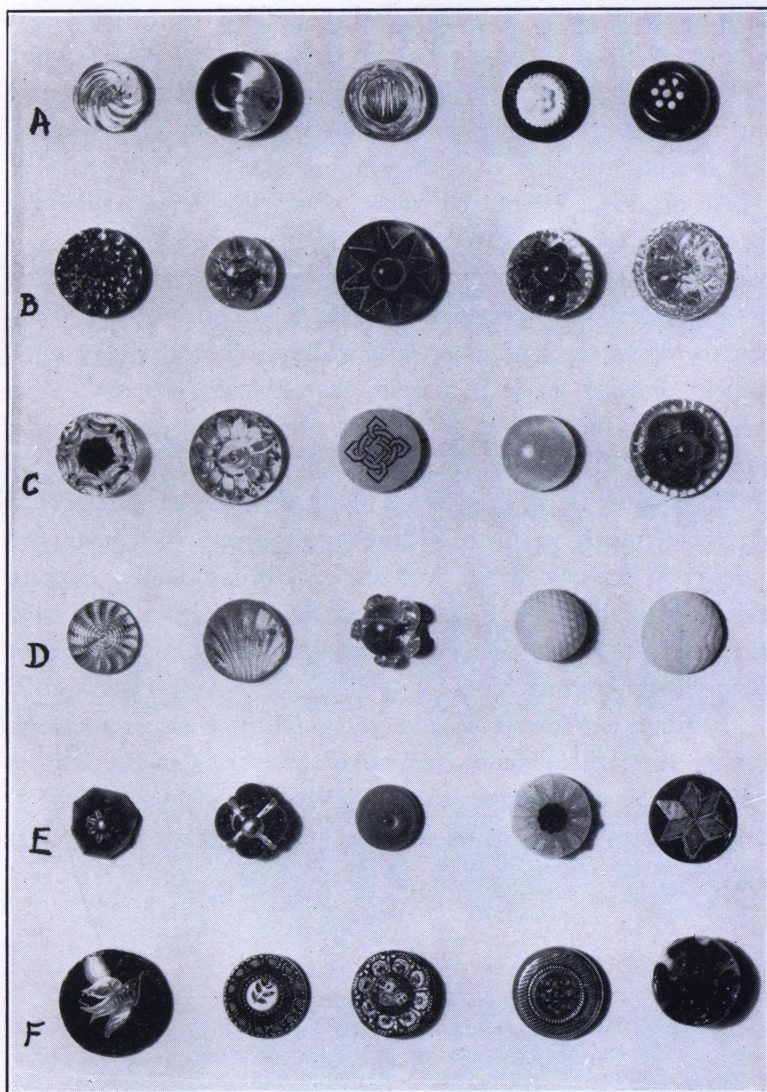


PLATE 15.

Buttons illustrated are seven-eighths of actual size



THURSDAY — Today sister and I decided to remount our buttons. We'll be working on that for some time. It's a good idea to remount after a time for it gives you a chance to handle and re-examine them. It is indeed surprising all one misses on first mounting.

As no doubt all of you know, classifying them takes quite some time. I keep a large covered box, the bottom of which is lined with paper cups. Thus each type is kept separate and when the cups overflow I set about the task of mounting them. I like best to mount my buttons on stiff white cardboard, size 9 x 11 inches, allowing an inch margin, then I mark the rest off in inch squares for smaller buttons, increasing the square for the larger sizes. I have seen many attractively mounted buttons on plates, screens, framed under glass, etc., but none has impressed me so definitely as those whose arrangement is regular and orderly. When one stresses intricate designs in mounting buttons, it is the design and not the buttons that meet the eye and hold it to such a degree that one unconsciously follows pattern of design first, buttons second.

Lebanon is celebrating its bi-centennial this summer and I am hoping that when housewives make those trips to the attic to look up their old treasures they will trip over some of those forgotten strings that were so common here when my mother was a girl.

#### PLATE 16.

Row No.	<i>Classification and Description</i>
A & B	Buffalo horn—found by Dorothy Lloyd of Hamburg, Penna., and by the author on original cards marked <i>M U Co. Buffalo Horn</i> . Patented June 20, 1871 and August 10, 1875—hole type. Patented January 10, 1881 and June 24, 1884—shank type. Original prices, 15 to 25 cents a dozen.
C & D	Horn inlays—in combinations of mother-of-pearl and silver—intricate designs—very lovely buttons. A patent was granted for inlays about 1840.



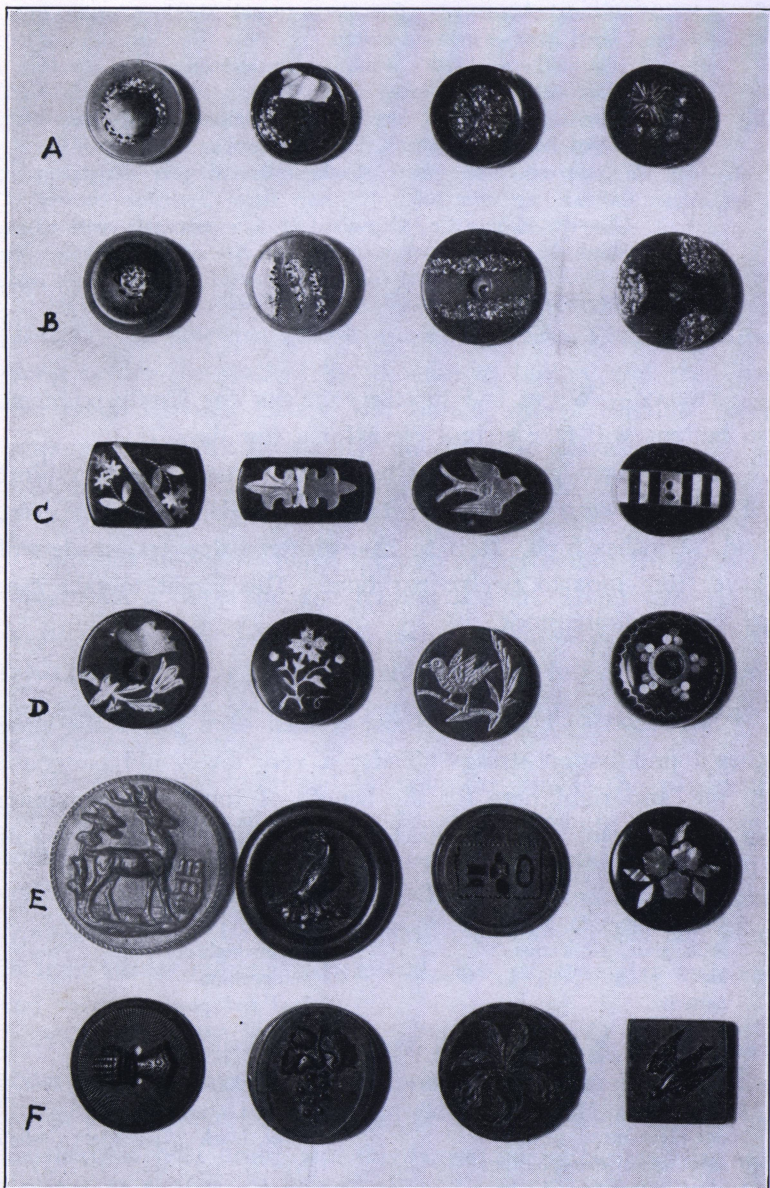


PLATE 16.

Buttons illustrated are seven-eighths of actual size.



- E    1    Natural horn—very fine—large metal shank—sporting type.  
       2    Dyed horn—sporting button.  
       3    Plastic horn—"Pick" mark, key escutcheon design.  
       4    Cardboard—with inlay, about 1840.
- F    1    Plastic horn—"Pick" mark, gauntlet escutcheon design.  
       2    Dyed horn—wire shank, bunch of grapes design.  
       3    Goodyear rubber—wire shank, embossed pear design, patent 1851.  
       4    Novelty Rubber Co., Organized 1855, sole mfgs.—wire shank, bird design. Entered according to Act of Congress in year 1870. (Bears out fact that buttons dated 1851 were not made in 1851.)

FRIDAY — We've had to take time out for family reunions, so buttons will take second place for a few days.

P. S.—Have given orders today for a new button cabinet of the following dimensions: 18 inches wide, 11 inches deep, and 52 inches high. It is to have thirteen drawers which will have from nine to twelve partitions. This ought to take care of my duplicate stock.

SATURDAY — I knew if those women once got to the attics they'd find button strings! Today a very lovely old one came to me, and right here for the benefit of those just beginning to collect, I am going to make a list of this complete string of 499 buttons.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 4 kaleidoscopes in gay plaids                               | 8 rubber                               |
| 8 milk glass, all shapes                                    | 4 paperweights                         |
| 57 black glass (Jets) in all-over pattern                   | 15 composition                         |
| 10 black glass (Jets), hand-colored, both fired and unfired | 10 lead and pewter                     |
| 14 black glass (Jets), silver lustre                        | 4 pressed metal shells                 |
| 15 black glass (Jets), gold lustre                          | 2 natural horn (undyed)                |
| 5 one-piece metal pewter                                    | 2 drum shape                           |
| 40 small metal dress buttons                                | 10 smoked ocean pearls                 |
| 5 glass center, metal rim                                   | 1 large black glass (Jet), 3-hole type |
| 15 embossed gold, one piece                                 | 10 figures, all metals                 |
|   | 4 colored glass, raspberry type        |



- |                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| 5 clambroth                      | 4 two-color glass with shank                                |
| 50 bone, horn, hoof, ivory       | 15 gaiter and shoe buttons in different colors and patterns |
| 8 plastic horn, pick back        | 3 painted tin design  |
| 20 heads, all materials          | 8 colored glass shoe button type with overlay in white      |
| 20 scenes, all materials         | 25 escutcheon type, all materials                           |
| 8 one-piece metal yellow         | 30 large coat size, all materials                           |
| 5 metal gold engraved crudely    | 5 large heavy pearls  |
| 11 jeweled waistcoat, metal rims | 20 flowers, all materials                                   |
| 8 gold nugget style              |   |
| 11 clear glass                   |   |

By right this charm string should have had twice as many on it, but the lady that gave it to me said Prince Charming came along before she reached the thousandth button, and then she had other interests! These old button strings certainly were properly named for they surely do charm us collectors!

SUNDAY — Sister invited a group of her button friends here tonight for a discussion and trading session. There were seven of us seated around the table, each one showing her classified cards or plates. For just beginners they were full of enthusiasm, and for collecting so short a period of time they had acquired many fine old buttons.

There is much to be said on mounting, and in this particular group all of them had seen Mrs. Lloyd of Hamburg and remembered one thing—the orderly and systematic arrangement of her collection. Some used colored cardboard for mounting certain types of buttons. I remember “jets” on yellow, green and blue in light shades rather effective, and glass paperweights on silks and velvets.

There was animated trading and these women were particular about the condition of the buttons. One of these ladies has gotten a sizeable collection together in a very short time. She had been in poor health and this button hobby has so filled up her time that she has taken a new lease on life. Today her col-



lection is worth seeing. If you are in the vicinity of Sheridan, Pennsylvania, go to Waldeck Farm Guest House. I spent an evening there lately with Miss Emma Gable, looking at her many beautiful buttons.

It was at her place that I saw an old waistcoat on which two entirely different types of buttons were sewed. Calico and gold plated nugget style were alternated. The nugget type buttons were small gold-plated buttons which came into use after the Gold Rush of 1849. In the West, genuine gold nuggets with hammer dents were worn; these plated ones were manufactured and worn by those not able to get the real thing.

Through these parts of the Pennsylvania Dutch country, older people recall seeing calico buttons on men's shirts, children's clothes, and ladies' wrappers (the forerunner of the house coat). When I was a child my mother had her morning wrappers made in Reading, Pennsylvania, and I remember there were calico buttons on them. Some time ago I contacted that store and found that they still make the wrappers but use smoked pearl buttons today. They told me that the old stock was used up. However, I did get some from that store—in fact, all they had. About 1905-1908 the calico buttons were still being used there. At that time my grandmother wore them on her calico prints. Many of my loveliest ones came from her box. All through Pennsylvania it is still easy to find calico buttons, although some are worn looking and chipped. I wonder how many of you have come across the brass-bound type—a narrow brass rim clamped over the whole edge. I have several of them, in fact have never seen any elsewhere. They evidently protected the edge from chipping. (*see Plate 2, E-1*).

There was also a small button mould covered with calico of the finest printed patterns. (*see Plate 1, A-2*). These are very quaint little buttons and come from Mrs. Buchanan's summer place in Maine and Dorothy Lloyd in Hamburg. The original



price was ten cents a dozen, and there were 144 buttons on each card. They were beautifully made and the materials are still in fine condition. The author has also found calico cloth covered buttons about one-quarter inch in diameter, same size as the above-mentioned, except that these have linen thread backs. The card indicates a bronze medal was won in 1844, and a gold one in 1849; these buttons also are of French origin. One can readily infer that these calico covered buttons were the fore-runners of the china buttons with quaint little patterns (similar in design to the old printed patterns); the china buttons came into use about the middle of the century. The earliest date found on cards is 1852.

In 1807 B. Sanders introduced an improved method of manufacturing a button formed of two discs of metal locked together by having their edges turned back on each other and enclosing a filling of cloth or pasteboard. Sanders' buttons at first had metal shanks, but about 1825 his son invented flexible shanks of canvas or other substance through which the needle would pass. The mechanical manufacture of covered buttons was started in the United States in 1827.

Tomorrow we plan to leave for Hightstown, tend to affairs there, and go in to Cooper Union Museum on Tuesday.

## PLATE 17.

### WAISTCOAT BUTTONS

Row	No.	Classification and Description
A	1	Opaque glass—formed without contact of shaping surface.
	2	Carnelian—gold wire through button forming shank; before 1800.
	3	Jewel glass—laminated; process shown Landis Valley Museum.
	4	Marbled glass—metal-backed, gold-plated collet.
	5	Onyx—beautifully mounted in beaded gold setting.
B	1	Opaque glass—swirl "set-up" with shank.



- 2 Black glass—rose "set-up" with shank, unmounted.
- 3 Jewel glass—laminated; process shown Landis Valley Museum.
- 4 Marbled glass—beveled sides, with shank.
- 5 Goldstone—beautiful, rope setting.
- C 1 Colored glass—porcelain medallion, gold-plated collet.
- 2 Milk glass—rose "set-up", gold-plated collet.
- 3 Milk glass—Jenny Lind, metal collet.
- 4 Opaque glass—horse's head in high relief, brass collet.
- 5 Milk glass—brass head escutcheon, brass collet, beaded edge.

## KALEIDOSCOPES

- | Row | No. | Classification and Description   |
|-----|-----|--|
| D   | 1   | Frosted glass—large shank plate and shank. Original card shows embossed eagle with outspread wings, holding olive branch in one talon, and three arrows in the other; shield on breast showing stripes and three stars; banner held in beak marked "E Pluribus Unum." 72 buttons to a card colored soft blue, original price 18 cents a dozen. Found by Dorothy Lloyd, Hamburg, Penna. |
|     | 2   | Clear glass—convex, large tin shank plate and shank.   |
|     | 3   | Clear glass—on blue pigment foil; dome-shaped with concave center, surface cut and filled with paint.  |
|     | 4   | Clear glass—faceted top over gay plaid design.   |
|     | 5   | Clear glass—on black pigment foil with gold stripes, large, heavy button with ground edge.   |

## PAPERWEIGHT TYPES

- | Row | No. | Classification and Description  |
|-----|-----|---|
| E   | 1   | Rose 2-piece—P. W., metal shank.  |
|     | 2   | Rose center—insert (preformed), amber glass collet, metal shank. (Nova Scotia button)                 |
|     | 3   | Cone-shaped—P. W., light blue, white, goldstone, white base.  |
|     | 4   | Molded—P. W., with preformed "set-up" in base.  |
|     | 5   | Rain drop—P. W., solid color back, wire shank. Courtesy of "Patchwork House," Hightstown, New Jersey. |
| F   | 1   | Opaque—P. W., preformed rose "set-up" in milk glass, metal shank plate and shank.                     |
|     | 2   | Clear glass ball—P. W., Christmas tree design, with goldstone, metal shank plate and shank.           |
|     | 3   | Clear glass ball—P. W., flower design at bottom; shank plate and shank.                               |
|     | 4   | Clear glass ball—P. W., gold and white ribbons in upper half; metal shank plate and shank.            |
|     | 5   | Snowflake—P. W., convex shape, amber color at base; shank.  |



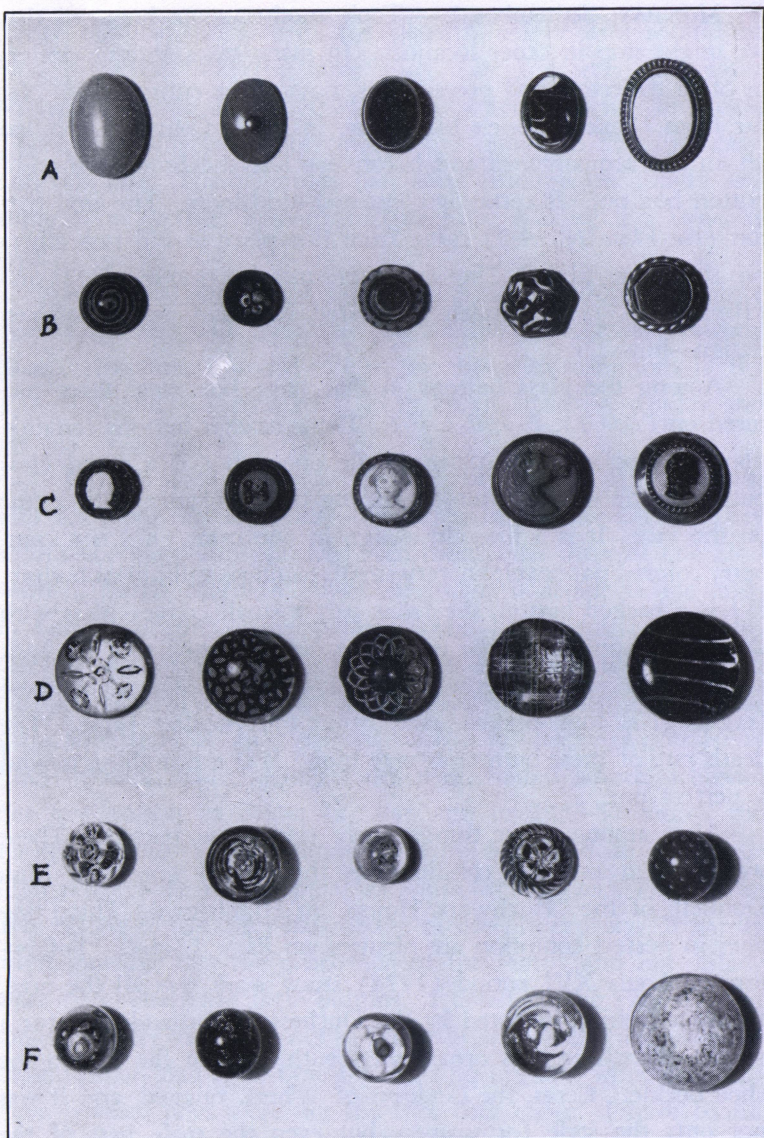


PLATE 17.

Buttons illustrated are seven-eighths of actual size



MONDAY, September 2 — Took another route home so that we might stop in other localities. In many cases antique dealers or other collectors had preceded us, buying the entire stock. Not far from Daniel Boone's birthplace, in Berks County, we called on an old acquaintance and before we left she brought the old button box out. It certainly contained old-timers. The iron button (*see Plate 18, A-2*) came from this place as did two others on the same plate. The one-piece metal (*copper, B-1*) and (*Bronze, E-3*) are crudely decorated by hand as the uneven design shows.

Among the glass buttons in that same box were three pictured on *Plate 15, B-3, E-3, F-1*. Those heavier buttons certainly played havoc with the more fragile ones. *B-3* is a green glass button, made in cavity mold, shaping the back only, with a tear on the face. It is a fine old design in one color. *E-3* is a cranberry colored paperweight, very small, having a milk glass bottom. *F-1* is a backed button, the front part a small convex glass with decoration applied on the underside, was fastened to a tin back all filled in with a pitch or tar. There were dozens of these fragile glass tops broken away from the peculiar backs. The death rate of these buttons is very high. It is a rare thing to find a perfect one.

Also, among other things, were tiny straw buttons. These were not in as good condition as the ones I got from Miss Donnell, of the "Patchwork House" in Hightstown. Three tiny ones in perfect condition are pictured on *Plate 1, A-4*. "Following the Louis XVI period (1774) straw work was all the rage. It was a fashion invented by the Duchess of Rutland, and for a season everything was ornamented with it from the cap to the shoe buckle. Ceres, the Goddess of Wheat, reigned, and it was not only the style for women, but even the male part of the fashionable world wore waistcoats and coats ribbed with straw."\*

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\* "*The Dresses of the Mistresses of the White House* by Rose Gouverneur Hoës. Historical Publishing Co., Washington, D. C.



These buttons, too, are of the perishable type and should be well protected. On the same plate (B-5) a grey and white stoneware button in two colors is mounted showing the back. There were only two colors in this box, tan with flecks of grey, and this one. These buttons had holes through the top to sew through, as well as a shank on the back, making it a two-way type.

Also got a number of large size picture buttons, but since *Button Classics* will enlighten you on this type, I am omitting them. However, I would like to say that picture buttons in the 1/2, 5/8, and 7/8 inch sizes do make an attractive display and are not as expensive.

I bought some lovely little waistcoat buttons in Pottstown; also got more metals—gold plated ones in fine condition. They seem to be hand-wrought, and even though the three of one kind seem to match, there are slight variations in detail, as one finds in buttons of the earlier periods. The little waistcoat buttons were in sets of eight or more, and today I got the following designs: brown, flat-topped with goldstone swirls; green clear glass with stars of gold painted on the surface; and one Jenny Lind in milk white. Jenny Lind, a celebrated singer, achieved her first success in Berlin in 1845 and in 1850-52 toured the United States. These buttons showing her head in cameo or high relief were very popular as waistcoat buttons. They probably belong to the latter half of the nineteenth century. It hardly seems possible that the gentlemen of the family and not milady wore these charming little buttons. I notice in the Pennsylvania Dutch country they were not as plentiful as in the cities. Possibly those farmers had little time for dressing up, and when they did these jeweled ones were not the type they chose. I have found more often the nugget type there.

If one is to go on with the theory that these little set-ups are the same in both paperweight and waistcoat buttons (in the



latter the set-up is ground to a flat surface on top and sides), then they must have been made after 1850, for the paperweight method was not in use much before. However, men did wear jewelled waistcoat buttons in the eighteenth century and they carried over until nearly the end of the nineteenth century.

We arrived home before dark, and was Patty ever glad to see us! I think the son was, too, especially to be relieved of responsibility. We now plan to look after the place here for a few days, then go into New York to Cooper Union.

Oh, I mustn't forget to mention, the Engles arrived home from Michigan tonight. They had inspected the relative's button boxes and brought back quite a number I did not have—large picture buttons, "The Life of a Sparrow" (which are copied exactly from the engraving in the story itself) in tinted metal, calicos in dark brown, and a Queen Elizabeth head in silver lustre on "jet". There were many more in metals of the late nineteenth century, floral and geometric patterns, even some on original cards. That wasn't so bad for a start, was it? I might convert Lottie yet!

We decided, with the fall term of school beginning on Wednesday, we had better get the Cooper Union trip in tomorrow. Already club work is piling up. I've undertaken the presidency this year, and there are the other organizations to which I belong, each clamoring for participation in its fall activities. I have a feeling that the end of this Journal is near at hand!

#### PLATE 18.

Row	No.	Classification and Description
A	1	Pewter—solid; flat; monogrammed "U.S.A.", Continental Army, General service; found near Trenton, N. J.
	2	Iron—molded, one-piece, crude.
	3	Pewter—molded, solid, with brass shank. Made by D. Pritchard.
	4	Iron—one-piece hand-carved with beveled edge.



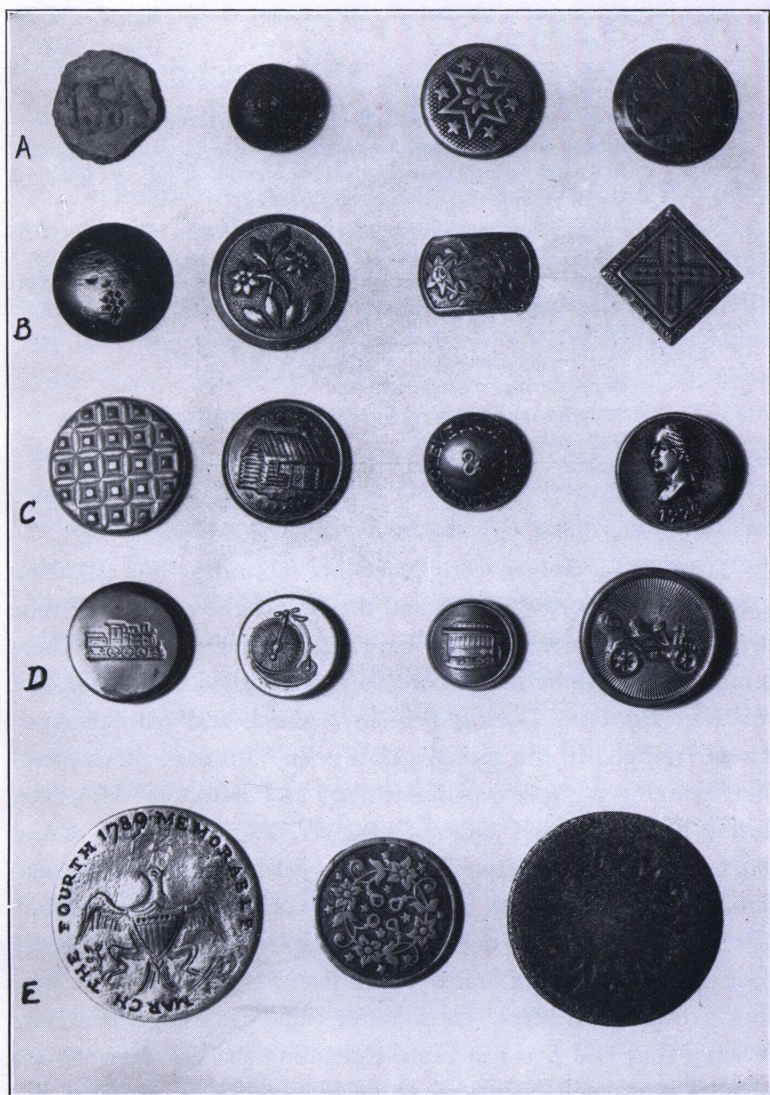


PLATE 18.

Buttons illustrated are seven-eighths of actual size.



- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| B | 1 | Brass—one-piece convex, hand-carved, made by W. Wallis (about 1820)   |
|   | 2 | Brass—one-piece convex, machine-pressed, made by Benedict & Burnham (1829-1843)   |
|   | 3 | Brass—one-piece convex oblong, machine-pressed.   |
|   | 4 | Brass—one-piece, machine-pressed, design through on reverse.  |
| C | 1 | Brass—two-piece convex, machine-pressed, made by J.M.J. & W. H. Scovill, Waterbury (1827-1840).                                   |
|   | 2 | Brass—two-piece convex, political, Harrison campaign, 1840. (There are at least six types of this famous political button.)       |
|   | 3 | Brass—two-piece convex, political, Presidential campaign, 1884; "Cleveland & Hendricks", reverse tin back. (not listed in Emilio) |
|   | 4 | Brass—commemorative reproduction.   |
| D |   | Brass—transportation buttons.   |
| E | 1 | Brass—commemorative button, hand-engraved, very fine.   |
|   | 2 | Iron—stamped design.  |
|   | 3 | Bronze—hand-engraved, 18th Century button.  |

TUESDAY — Got an early start this morning. We called on some of our importer friends and then spent the rest of our time at the Cooper Union Museum for the Arts of Decoration. There is much indeed to be said about this exhibit called *Four Thousand and One Buttons*. During February, March and part of April it was arranged in the special galleries and attracted much attention, bringing designers, manufacturers and collectors. However, during these months I did not get over, so right here I should like to pay special tribute to its curator, Miss Mary S. M. Gibson, through whose kindness a private showing was made possible. The button exhibit was no longer on display, since it had already gone through the preliminary months of showing. It is now anticipating permanent classification and housing. Cabinets between four and five feet high, containing shallow drawers into which buttons will be placed (on white cardboard under glass) are now under construction.

Nowhere was more courtesy shown us than here, as Miss Gibson brought tray after tray to be inspected and examined at



close range. The afternoon was none too long—in fact, we stayed until the doors closed.

These buttons reflect all the styles in history, military, and social life, as well as many occupations, the oldest buttons dating from the sixteenth century.

On the site of the Revolutionary War Barracks at West Point, New York, crude buttons were excavated. They were carved from meat bones by American soldiers during that war. There are military buttons on display from three wars; the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, and the World War. Two buttons made from conch shells and worn by Washington measure over an inch in diameter and have a gold star in the center. They tell that the shells from which they were made were sold to Washington himself by a sailor on the Philadelphia waterfront.

On a costume worn by Toussaint L'Overture, an eighteenth century Haitian negro patriot and martyr, are shown eighteen buttons made from ivory, on which Brunias, the English artist of the eighteenth century, painted scenes of island life, these being covered with glass and having a gold collet.

One need only look at the children's and doll clothes, and accessories, to see the decorative uses to which buttons were put. The costumes of the Persian children date in the sixteenth century, while those from Italy and France are from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, respectively.

During the eighteenth century the clever and skillful guildsmen brought the art employed in the making of buttons to such a high peak that never before nor since has the workmanship been equalled. Jewelled buttons in particular were among those whose intricacy of design and cut attracted me most. The manner in which they were mounted in cluster settings, single, or on top of large inch and a half pearl buttons was especially striking. These mid-nineteenth century pearl buttons are different from those I have seen elsewhere. The combinations are indeed



unusual. Buttons the size of a silver dollar and even larger with radial designs are set with paste gem centers; many of them are petal-shaped; cut steel and pearl combinations; initialed and monogrammed centers with beaded edge; coin silver center with wide pearl rim; flat striped glass disc mounted on pearl with gem paste center; one very beautiful delft blue scene in miniature set in a pierced pearl with a cut petal-shaped edge. There are a number of engraved ones, representing animals, scenes, and other symbols. There are also many other combinations not named.

By the middle of the eighteenth century the English had developed to a high degree the cut steel button industry. These are very interesting buttons for each little faceted bit of steel had to be cut and polished before it was riveted to a disc of metal. Earlier in my Journal I spoke of cut steel buttons at an old dressmaking shop here in New York, selling for \$8.50 a dozen (the size of a silver dollar); the one I purchased has a hundred separate bits of steel riveted to a convex metal disc, with a border of cut steel, imitating leaves. Sometimes the metal disc to which these bits of steel are fastened is gold-plated but more often it is brass or white metal. Many of these buttons have been imported from England and France, and from the standpoint of craftsmanship rank very high.

There is a very fine exhibit of balloon commemorative buttons. They recall the interest in balloon ascensions made by the Montgolfier brothers, paper manufacturers at Annonay, near Lyons, about 1783. These are painted buttons under glass and as I recall no two were alike.

"The button makers of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries showed much inventiveness in the variety of materials which they employed. Some excellent work was done in porcelain decorated with delicate figures and flowers, sometimes with the surface modelled to represent woven material. Wedgwood



and his imitators in England, France, and Belgium, supplied blue-and-white stoneware with portraits, trophies, and antique subjects in very low relief. Little shells, insects, and mosses were arranged under glass into compositions resembling miniature habitat groups, and in the same way small butterflies and birds were fashioned of brightly colored feathers.

"Picture buttons represent another eighteenth century development. Many were painted on metal or ivory, with domed glass covers for protection. Among the classes of ornamentation were antique subjects, historical scenes, portraits, and playing cards. Jean-Baptiste Isabey (1767-1855) is known to have painted buttons during his youth, copying tableaux of lovers, flowers, and landscapes from Boucher and Van Loo. Similarly, figures after Watteau and Greuze were applied to buttons in paint and enamel. In 1788 architectural subjects became popular, and collectors formed "galleries" of button pictures of the monuments of Paris.

"In the middle of the nineteenth century about twenty thousand people were employed in making buttons in France. There was an especially great demand for porcelain buttons, the manufacture of which flourished at Montereau and Briare, respectively within fifty and one hundred miles of the capital. Paris was the center for covered buttons and those of metal, enamel, shell, bone, and horn. Germany ranked second in number of workers. In addition to her active home market, she furnished great quantities of cheap buttons to England, Russia, Spain, Italy, and the United States."\*

In England, Birmingham led in the production of shell buttons, although every other kind was made. From a few other countries came representative types such as engraved silver

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\* *Chronicle of the Museum for the Arts of Decoration of Cooper Union*, Volume 1, Number 6, pp. 238, 239, 241. Article by Carl C. Dauterman.



from Holland; filigree silver from Spain; intricate miniature mosaics from Italy; and from Bohemia the lovely glass buttons.

Here also I found those quaint little calico buttons. There are so few of these in comparison to the many I have in my collection and each little button is marked in red ink on the back, indicating its catalogue number—a regular case history! During the years I have been collecting I have found very few calico buttons on the original cards. One card shows that calico buttons were awarded medals in 1852, 1863, and 1865. The card is printed, "*Boutons Perle Fantaisie.*" As I noted on my trip through Pennsylvania, these buttons can still be found, and up until last year could be purchased at nearly all of the country stores in the Pennsylvania Dutch country.

To go back to Cooper Union:—I also examined very carefully a salesman's sample card with buttons of the French period, the last quarter of the eighteenth century. These were made over moulds with embroidered design in metal thread or spangles in every color. The card is very well preserved and the buttons are truly beautiful. On it one sees about forty-four different designs, on buttons the size of a quarter, and about a dozen smaller ones.

I was much impressed also by the hand-painted shell button portraits of tragediennes of the French stage in the Directoire period. The subjects one finds framed under glass covers here possibly enchanted me the most because they are entirely different from any I have seen anywhere. Dewy was simply fascinated with the very large metal buttons, those with designs crudely engraved by hand on bronze, brass, and copper. On a button string, lately, I came across a very fine one in bronze the size of a silver dollar. It is a bit similar to the one on *Plate 1, E-3*. There are vegetable ivory buttons and some of catalin that I am just mentioning in passing; also many "Sporting Buttons."

There is also a splendid library here where one can find



not only illustrations but information on all subjects in art. I am sure that these people are going to see more of me at this museum, and I too, am going to see more of those beautiful buttons. The charm and beauty of those buttons will be imprinted upon your memory that a trip to this museum should be classed as a pilgrimage. It is as such that I cherish it.

WEDNESDAY — Today should have forty-eight hours in it, and then it wouldn't be long enough to write all I want. So many events have happened that I have made a list in order not to forget any. I'll take the mail first. There were over a hundred replies to a sort of questionnaire I had sent out regarding the importance attached to dress buttons.

I have before me a number of letters written in long hand (much cherished by me, and especially the son who collects holographs) from our former Presidents' wives and widows. From time to time I have heard statements to the effect that women prominent in public life pay very little attention to such insignificant items as buttons. With that in mind together with the hope of uncovering some special or unusual button story, I contacted these ladies, and with their permission I am using these statements.

The first one in proper order comes from Mrs. Frances F. Cleveland Preston, a near neighbor of mine. I have seen her on a number of occasions, both in Hightstown and Princeton. To place her in a proper setting you will recall that Grover Cleveland entered the White House as a bachelor, and his marriage to Frances Folsom was solemnized in the Executive Mansion. During this administration she was the idol of the American people, and when she came back in 1893 she received a hearty welcome. When she went there in '86 the fashionable "jerseys" held sway. "It was an elastic fabric which fitted the



figure snugly, the object being to look as though the figure was melted and poured in. The tailor who could fashion a waist or coat without a break or wrinkle might consider his fortune made, for only men's tailors were considered fit to make these costumes. By 1890, a decided change in size of sleeves and width of skirt revived the fashions of 1830, thus changing the silhouette to the hour glass once more. Skirts in many instances measured seven to nine yards at the bottom, accentuating the very small tightly laced waist."\* Mrs. Preston says: "my gowns fastened mostly with hooks and eyes or lacing and I recall much tiresome back lacing! I am afraid I don't like any buttons very well. I much prefer the more convenient zipper." "It should be remembered, in dwelling upon women's fashions for the 80's, that heavy silks and brocades were fashionable for older women, and this young girl of twenty-two tried to live up to this exalted position, so she patterned her wardrobe after theirs rather than that of the younger generation who were wearing lighter weight materials such as gauze, tulle and muslin."† Mrs. Preston is still a beautiful woman, and always well dressed. I am grateful to have this letter, even though she says: "I haven't the faintest recollection that I ever had any buttons on any of my dresses worn during our years in Washington. You know it was a long time ago!"

From Mrs. Benjamin Harrison, a most gracious elderly lady of eighty-two, came two very sincere notes. You will remember she married the President in 1896 in New York.

When she was born ladies were wearing hoop skirts and "the costumes of the period were overloaded with all sorts of trimming, heavy plaitings, puffs, bows of ribbon and ruffles of lace."\*

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\* *A Study of Costume* by Elizabeth Sage. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.

† *The Dresses of the Mistresses of the White House* by Rose Gouverneur Hoes. Historical Publishing Co., Washington, D. C.



By the time she was a young lady, skirts were being cut into gores, and the material required for a correct gown was reduced from sixteen or seventeen yards to ten or twelve. "The dress now became a construction of flounces, fringes, loops, and puffings; and the great mass trailed a yard or two after the wearer. And this was fashion!"\* She went through the "tied-back" time when skirts were drawn so tightly over the knees that walking was difficult. The distinguishing characteristics of this next period were the bustle, boned basque, and polonnaise. We must keep in mind that besides buttons worn by some women, "fashion had set her approval upon all the little accessories of dress; and yokes, collars, fichus, and berthas were worn in great variety,"\* thereby giving the otherwise plain bodice the touch needed to make it fashionable.

The year she was married fashion placed much accent on sleeves, and collars were high, closely encircling the throat, frequently edged with a frill of plaiting. Many of the waists opened at the side or back with invisible closing. More stress has been laid upon the materials in vogue at the end of the century than the buttons that were worn. There was great variety in satins, silks, foulardiards, grenadines, wools and prints. An interesting note to me was the fashionable colors used—Vandyke red, lotus blue, and an undecided blue-green called Venetian heliotrope. I have found many of the small metal buttons in these very shades, linking them up with this period when these colors were popular. (*see Plate 4, Row B*).

The early years of Mrs. Harrison's married life were busy ones, her husband representing the United States at the Hague Conference (his last public service). Joy because of the birth of a baby daughter and sorrow over the loss of her husband were crowded closely together in those first five years of her marriage.

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\* *Historic Costume* by Katherine Morris Lester. Published by the Manual Arts Press.



All through her life she has been a devoted mother and has remained most loyal to her party. When my first letter came from her, it was heavily padded to protect the contents, a large three and one-half inch *Willkie Button!*, with the following quotation: "I do not recall any buttons that I had on my gowns in the 90's and I never had any designed for me. I am, however, enclosing with this one of "Willkie" which we are now wearing, and I hope you will accept it and give Mr. Willkie your vote." Her second note tells me she looked through her photographs and could find none showing buttons. I can easily see how that could be, for among my friends I know of two who prefer closed blouses or waists on their dresses so that they may wear necklaces or clasps. And this is today...when fashion has decreed that buttons are as important an accessory to dress as jewelry. And so, with grateful acknowledgement to Mrs. Harrison, I shall go over Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt's letter with you.

The transition period between 1897 when Mrs. Preston left the White House and Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt entered it in 1901 is very noticeable. She married Mr. Roosevelt in London in 1886. This, as I said before, was the period of the jersey and the kilted skirt. "It was adopted from England where it had been originated by Lily Langtry, the "Jersey Lily" as she was called, to show her beautiful figure. It was worn by practically every woman and child. This period is also the beginning of the "tailor-made" for women which practically revolutionized ladies' dresses. The principal change for the next ten or twenty years seemed to be in the size of the sleeve and fullness of the skirt—the former growing either larger at the top or wrist or tight in all of its length. Skirts remained practically plain, sometimes extended at the bottom or top by means of drapery; they dragged on the floor with long trains, but not on the street. Women were beginning to study principles of cleanliness and



health, and this was having influence on costume for the first time."\*

I remember the beautiful gown on the mannikin in the Smithsonian Institute worn by Mrs. Roosevelt; it is the one she wore for her distinguished husband's inaugural ball. "It is a beautiful shade of light blue, brocaded in silver swallows. The waist is exceedingly plain, except for a wide ruffle of the finest point lace around the low-cut neck.†" The material is rich and beautiful, and must have outshone all the others at the ball.

Mrs. Roosevelt writes: "I don't seem to have been interested in buttons except from a utilitarian purpose. Like all old-fashioned housekeepers, I once had a button bag. Alas! Those buttons are as scattered as *The Years of the Household*, the title of some verses by Mrs. Hemans. I am really sorry that I can be of no assistance and can only wish that your search may be successful."

"In 1908 emphasis fell upon the tunic or drapery, a Greek idea which was used in both street and evening dresses."‡ Fashion always swings from extreme to extreme, and skirts became as narrow as they could possibly be. "Never since the time of the Louis' had fashions been so assailed as was this close-fitting skirt,"\* and it continued to become more scant until—finally the binding was slashed at the lower edge—sometimes even the seams in front or back were left open to knee depth! "It is no wonder bills were introduced into state legislatures aiming to correct and regulate women's dress!"‡

A parade of fashions followed: the hobble skirt, peg-top draped affair, 1916 skirts full and shorter. "By 1920-21 all

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\* *A Study of Costume* by Elizabeth Sage. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.

† *The Dresses of the Mistresses of the White House* by Rose Gouverneur Hoes. Published by Historical Publishing Co., Washington, D. C.

‡ *Historic Costume* by Katherine Morris Lester. Published by the Manual Arts Press.



women irrespective of age, height and width donned the scant skirt reaching just below the knee.”\* This short skirt with but little variations in length, trimmed with tiers, ruffles, or plaits, has continued to the present day.

In practically this type of setting we can place Mrs. Herbert Hoover. She met her future husband at Stanford University and they were married as soon as she graduated from college. Mrs. Hoover has lived with her family in many lands where her husband's work took him. She is a lover of the outdoors, a capable geologist, has translated Latin works, and is a charming hostess. She was president of the Girl Scouts for years, and is now its honorary president.

From Mrs. Hoover's secretary comes the following quotation: "Mrs. Hoover said that buttons had really no important part in her dresses since she was a little girl. Indeed, she could not remember any but some of the every-day sports dresses that did have buttons. Therefore, her Girl Scout uniform was the one that came to her mind as of special interest to her—and having buttons! She is glad to send you one of the buttons from her Girl Scout leader's uniform."

It is interesting to note that in both Mrs. Harrison's and Mrs. Hoover's comments on buttons, each thought of something other than self—Mrs. Harrison her party, and Mrs. Hoover the Girl Scouts.

In a poll of over two hundred women prominent in the public eye today, just twenty were button conscious.

The list included college presidents, deans, professors, club presidents, authors, and executives. This poll on a small scale rather strengthens the statement mentioned before, that most women in public office pay little attention to buttons.

While sharing the replies of these prominent women with you, I should like to share with you some of my notes after

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\* *Historic Costume* by Katherine Morris Lester. Published by the Manual Arts Press



seeing those dresses of the mistresses of the White House that are in Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C. Very few of the costumes there have buttons, and where these do occur they are covered with the material of which the dress was made. I recall Mrs. Monroe's, a beautiful gown of the richest brocade, decorated with round, tufted, raised forms, covered with the selfsame material and made to resemble buttons. "It is also trimmed with old-fashioned fly fringe, a trimming very much in vogue at this time, seldom seen on old gowns, and is called after that much-despised insect, the household fly."\* And while on the subject of flies, the material used in Martha Washington's dress is worthy of mention. "The whole dress is hand-painted in a set design. In the larger blocked spaces one sees wild flowers—the buttercup, daisy, morning glory, arbutus, etc.—while in the smaller spaces are the fly, grasshopper, wasp, lady-bug, and spider."\* Possibly the designs of these older buttons one finds today were copied from the same artist's sketch as were these materials.

The dress worn by Mrs. Rutherford B. Hayes is a creation of gold brocade combined with plain cream-colored satin. This gown is made with a row of half-inch buttons down the front, covered with the material from which the gown is made.

The dress worn by President Monroe's daughter, Mrs. Gouverneur, was of light blue silk, embroidered in straw to represent sheaves of wheat. Straw was a very becoming embroidery and trimming; it suited almost every complexion with its soft, pale yellow tint. Straw work was all the rage between 1817 and 1825. I have heard of no other time in history when it was revived, and am wondering how many of you found buttons made of straw.

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\* *The Dresses of the Mistresses of the White House* by Rose Gouverneur Hoos. Published by Historical Publishing Co., Washington, D. C.



With the accumulated mail were also a number of invitations to talk on *Costume Buttons Through the Centuries*. I rather think that will make interesting research reading for me for the months to come! As it is now, my friends give their buttons the "once over" whenever they get a glimpse of me. What will it be like by the time the winter is over?

The public schools opened today and Dewy is back in his laboratory again. After school hours for some time to come he will be getting the apparatus into shape, so I cannot count on his going with me to do any scouting.

There are more than a dozen "mail" trades waiting to be exchanged. How I wish I had a better system for this trading. I believe I shall have to use the card index system—then I will need a secretary for sure!

THURSDAY—I haven't mentioned any of Dewy's metal buttons which indeed are very fine. There are hundreds of plain flat metal discs with gold or silver plating on the face surface, the underside showing the most interesting markings. Just now, he is experimenting in mounting them on transparent celluloid sheets obtainable at the automobile accessories stores. In this way one can see the inscription on the back which is really more important than the design on the face. These were known as the colonial gilt and silver buttons. Many of them are marked with the manufacturer's name or are stamped with such markings as *Rich Color*, *Superfine*, *Triple Gilt*, *Extra Rich Colour*, *Rich Orange*, *Fine Quality*, etc.

There are also other types in the colonial gilt and metal one-piece class. Some of them have floral and conventional designs on the face (*see Plate 18, Row B*); eagle, (*same plate, E-1*); many of the large bronze and copper ones are hand-engraved (*E-3*); also there are the engraved heads of famous



men in history. Again, some of these metal buttons were made in two parts and Dewy has some very beautiful specimens in this class, in conventional type patterns especially. Then, there are the metal insignias of fraternal, industrial, commercial and municipal organizations which are in a different category,—and I mustn't forget to mention the commemorative buttons.

I had fully intended to have this Journal run along for about a period of six weeks time, but with school activities and painting classes starting again, I feel that I shall have to bring this record to a close. There are so many notes that I have not used and so many leads for obtaining more information that I have not followed yet. However, the first opportunity to do so will find me on my way! I shall always continue to make notes, for it is only by sharing our information on buttons that the hobby can move onward. Those collector friends of mine who suggested this record do not realize what a task it has been. The correspondence, interviews, days spent in research and travel have taken nearly all of the summer, and indeed a most interesting one it has been.

For months I have put aside those personal contacts with our friends we prize so much. Our repeated reply to invitations, all summer long, has been, "Sorry, we're off for button information." During the past two years all of my friends have become button conscious, even my most musical friend, Carlotta Davison (who teaches at Westminster Choir College) has actually gone with me to make numerous button calls! Scarcely a day goes by that someone does not bring me buttons or information regarding them—school children, church friends, faculty members, club women, and even Dr. Harry S. Hill, County Superintendent of the Schools!

It won't be at all difficult to get back into the swing of things again...everything is piled so high around me now that I know definitely where I'm going to begin...but first...I'm going to



settle down for a quiet evening with those quaint old calico buttons. I've been wanting to classify them according to Mr. Morgan's check list for a long, long time.

P. S.—On one of our trips to New York we came across the little gold-plated button pictured below—



(A Button Nut)

P. P. S.—Dewy suggests this button might be a good insignia for our Button Society.

That's all for now.

L. S. A.

*Jane H. Rowe*



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## COSTUME EXHIBITS CONSULTED

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Memorial Hall, Philadelphia

Metropolitan Art Museum, New York City

Landis Valley Museum, Lancaster, Pennsylvania

## BUTTON COLLECTIONS EXAMINED

Cooper Union Exhibit,—"Four Thousand and One Buttons"

Landis Valley Museum, Lancaster, Pennsylvania

Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.











